







VICTORIA AND ALBERT

*By the same Author*

OLDER PEOPLE, a book of reminiscences

MARIE TEMPEST, a biography

EDWARD VIII, a biography

BESIDE GALILEE, a diary in Palestine

THE HOUSE IN HALF MOON STREET, short stories

Etc.





VICTORIA AND ALBERT

HECTOR BOLITHO



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*Author's Note*

Since my book, *Albert the Good*, was published in 1932, many new letters written by the Prince Consort have been discovered. Through the kindness of the Keeper of the Archives at Windsor, and the gracious permission of H.R.H. the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, this correspondence has been made available and I have felt justified in re-writing my book, together with *Victoria the Widow and Her Son* into one volume. The new correspondence includes letters written by the Prince Consort to his tutor, and the interesting memorandum written by Prince Christian, quoted on pages 323 and 324.

My publishers, Messrs. Cobden-Sanderson, have graciously allowed me to withdraw the earlier books and re-publish them in this form. The sacrifice which they have made is consistent with a relationship which has given me pleasure for six years and I am deeply grateful to them.

In my books *Albert the Good* and *Victoria the Widow and Her Son*, there are liberal footnotes and authorities for the quotations from letters and journals. These authorities have not been repeated in *Victoria and Albert*. Where new documents and letters have been used, I have either added notes or explained the source in the text.

H. B.



## *Chapter One*

1817

Princess Louise of Saxe-Gotha was married to Prince Ernest of Saxe-Coburg in the summer, when the parched fields were alive with blue chicory flowers and the apple trees, heavy with fruit, sprawled over the roads. She was a child of sixteen, "radiating gracefulness and bewitching her surroundings."

Little more than a year before her betrothal, she had been confirmed. After the ceremony, she had thrown herself about her stepmother's neck and burst into tears. But these signs of childhood had passed quickly and she was happy when she drove away from Gotha as a bride. When she and Ernest exchanged rings at the wedding, thirty-six cannon shots had announced the glorious moment to the town and countryside.

As the Prince and Princess travelled along the gaily decked roads to Coburg, everyone shared their pleasure. They were loaded with wreaths and poems. Although Louise was gay, her eyes sometimes filled with tears. In such moments she looked up to the Prince by her side and her mournful doubts gave way to joy. Indeed, there was humour during the journey, for in the evening the peasants sang "Hail Duke, Hail Duchess, soon you will rock princesses in your lap. Then hail to you." Princess Louise wrote to her dearest friend, Augusta von Studnitz, in Gotha, "Is that not funny? I had to think of the Holy Trinity."

Of all the people who waited for her in Coburg, none was as imposing as her mother-in-law, "a most remarkable woman, with a powerful, energetic, almost masculine mind accompanied with great tenderness of heart and extreme love for nature. . . . She had fine and most expressive blue eyes." When Louise first saw her, she said she must really be an angel, "since God had given her such a son."

The Duchess watched the young couple nervously and affectionately from the first day when "the poor little woman" stepped into the room, so exhausted that she could not talk for crying. The Duchess wrote in her diary: "It is a charming, tiny being, not beautiful, but very pretty, through grace and vivacity. Every feature of her face has expression; her big blue eyes often look so

sad from under her black lashes, and then again, she becomes a happy wild child. . . . I hope she will still grow, as she is very short. . . . I had half the town to tea because everybody wished to congratulate me."

Among those who greeted Louise was Princess Victoria of Leiningen, afterwards Duchess of Kent. Louise thought her "very beautiful, tall and large, very white, black eyes and hair, she is most charming and natural. She presented me with a most pretty bracelet with her name in diamonds. The little Feodora,<sup>1</sup> her daughter, is my whole joy. She jumps with her Aunt Louise, for a wager."

The town of Coburg, to which Louise had come, lay at the foot of the hill upon which the mediæval *feste* was built, much as the castle and town of Windsor lie together in the valley of the Thames. The castle was not lived in, and the Ducal family divided their time between several immense and ornate palaces in other parts of the country. Schloss Ehrenburg was their house in Coburg and Schloss Rosenau was their small country home. This was four miles away: a quiet retreat surrounded by forests and fields.

Four days after her wedding Princess Louise wrote: "We heard a bad sermon, which contained nothing but praises of my Prince, with no religious thought. . . . The man is not wrong, only such a thing is not suitable in church. Then there was a big dinner at which I appeared in a pink and silver dress, with a train."

Prince Ernest took Louise to Rosenau in the evening. The gardens were illuminated, Chinamen danced, and nymphs, appearing from grottoes, presented her with poetic addresses. When Louise descended the stairs to the ballroom, her way was lined by beautiful children on pedestals, dressed as gods and scattering flowers. On the fifth day she was so exhausted that she had to spend the whole of the morning in bed. "All my relatives came to visit me," she wrote.

There was no pleasure she did not share with her friend Augusta in Gotha. "You will get a fright," she wrote from Rosenau, "when you receive this letter. . . . You will count the pages and cry out again, the Gossip! Will she never hold her tongue? I risk

<sup>1</sup> Princess Feodora, half-sister of Queen Victoria, and later Princess of Hohenlohe.

all this, and yet the thought gives me great pleasure, to talk and joke with you, to tell you how happy and contented and joyous I am. . . . If one loves an Angel, one's master and husband, one is much softer and more tender, more susceptible, and warmer also for friendship."

In the evening, Louise would sit with Ernest in the garden. She would watch the dark clouds changing their shapes as they drifted towards the distant castle. Her little hand would be curled within the bigger hand of her husband and, sitting thus, they would talk. A calm moon, the chuckle of the stream, the warm, still night . . . she would sigh and lean closer to him because even in her happiness she was lonely. She needed her friend. One night she pressed Ernest's hand and said: "If only Augusta could enjoy the quiet and beautiful evening with me. With you and she it would be too lovely." Ernest calmed her. "He thinks you will come to me," she wrote to Augusta. "Can I hope?"

About this time the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg recorded an event which changed the fortunes of many princes in England and Germany. "The Courier has arrived," she wrote in her diary. "Charlotte is dead! Good God! I cannot realise the gigantic tragedy. I cannot bear it. Poor, poor Leopold! She is dead, the beautiful, charming, good woman, the hope of a large population over which she would have ruled. Her death ruins the whole life happiness of Leopold. God's ways are wonderful, often terrible. No mortal can understand why this beautiful flower should fade at the morning of her life and drop off without fruit, with which she would have blessed her country."

A month after the death of Princess Charlotte, the Duke of Kent met Creevey in Brussels. It was then that he laid down the terms upon which he would be willing to marry, in the hope of giving an heir to the British throne.

The Duke of Kent had lived faithfully and happily with his mistress, Madam Saint Laurent, for twenty-seven years, "in all climates and in all difficulties together." If he married for the sake of the succession, it meant that he would have to abandon the woman who loved him for the cold experiment of marriage to a Princess he did not know. It was possible that he would lose all and gain nothing but financial benefits from the country. "The

nation . . . . is greatly my debtor," he said, and it is to his credit that when he married Princess Victoria, widow of Prince Charles of Leiningen, he was a faithful husband. He expelled his mistress and observed all the laws of domestic decency.

In January of 1819, the Duchess Augusta of Coburg wrote, "In a few moons perhaps, Victoria becomes the wife of a man she hardly knows. . . . The English Minister in Stuttgart, Mr. Taylor . . . . brings the glad news that the Regent and the Queen of England, as well as the people, desire the marriage. . . ." On May 26th, she wrote: "We had hardly sat down at table when his equerry arrived with the news that the Duke would follow in a few hours. . . . We waited with strained curiosity and poor Victoria with beating heart. She had seen him only once. The first moment, Kent was a little shy, however much he is a man of the world, in dropping like a bomb into such a large family." She thought him a handsome man for his age, and she was pleased with the expression of good nature around his mouth. "His tall figure has something noble and the simple blunt manner of the soldier combined with the delicate good breeding, make his intercourse very agreeable."

The engagement was announced on May 28th. Two days afterwards, the Duke of Kent stood under a velvet canopy in the Giant's Hall, looking very well in the uniform of an English Field-Marshal. His bride wore a fair dress, trimmed with white roses and orange blossom.

Less than a year after this, with the Duke himself on the box of the carriage, the married pair crossed Europe so that they might be in England when their baby was born. A gipsy had once told the Duke, when he was climbing the slopes of Gibraltar, that his daughter would be a great Queen, and it was not conceivable that she would rule any land but Britain.

## *Chapter Two*

1817-1819

Late in 1817, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg died and Ernest and Louise assumed their crowns, under the affectionate guidance of the Dowager Duchess. She wrote of Louise on her seventeenth birthday, "God grant that she may be as happy and jolly when she celebrates the eighteenth. Her youth and delicate body make me very afraid of her condition for the hour of becoming a mother. . . . Charlotte's loss makes me so despondent . . . . the poor thing appears to me only like a lovely vision. . . . I would give my life to ensure the child her happiness, because I love her like a daughter."

On June 21st, she wrote once more, "God be praised and thanked. Louise has been successfully delivered of a healthy boy." When their first baby was a few months old, the Duke and Duchess went on a long journey. Wherever they travelled, the roads and houses were dressed in gay colours and lights. At a place in the forest not far from Saalfeld, they ate a good dinner in a house made of moss and decorated with ornaments of coloured glass pearls. There was also a procession of charcoal burners who recited poems to them.

Louise continued to send childlike letters to her friend in Gotha; descriptions of the baby, who was to be named Ernest, mixed up with stories of her own gaiety, when she had recovered her health again. She confessed that at one dinner party, she laced herself so tightly that she fainted at the table and had been obliged to go home.

In August of the following year, Louise's second child was born. When the time was near, her carriage rolled out from Coburg to Rosenau. The yellow stone castle shone in the sunlight; near by were beeches, elms and oaks. Beyond the park were the high pines of the Thuringian Forest, stretching from state to state. About Rosenau Castle, the light was bright and the fields were beautiful with meadow saffron and red clover.

The little room in which Prince Albert was to be born was filled with French furniture. When Louise stood by the window, she looked out towards the morning sun which shone upon a waterfall, and a cool and clear river, which ran from the forest. Beyond the

fluttering white butterflies and the rose-garden there was a fountain with cool spouts of water beating down upon a base of stone.

The baby was born on August 26th, at six o'clock. The Dowager Duchess wrote immediately to the Duchess of Kent in England: "I am sitting by my Louischen's bed. She was yesterday morning safely and quickly delivered of a little boy." Siebold, the accoucheuse, had hurried across Europe after a similar service in Kensington Palace, where she had brought Princess Victoria into the world. While she tended the young Prince Albert, she talked of the older child at Kensington and of what a "dear little love" it was.

The Duchess Augusta continued her letter to England: "At six, the little one gave his first cry in this world. . . . Louise is much more comfortable here than if she had been laid up in town. The quiet of this house, interrupted only by the murmuring of the water, is so agreeable . . . no one considered the noise of the palace at Coburg, the shouts of the children and the rolling of the carriages in the streets."

When she had recovered, Louise wrote to Augusta, "My affectionate thanks for your dear letter. . . . You should see him. He is pretty as an angel. He has big blue eyes, a beautiful nose, quite a small mouth and dimples in his cheeks. He is friendly and he smiles the whole time. He is so big that a cap which Ernest wore when he was three months old is too small for him. And he is only seven weeks as yet!"

Albert was not strong but like his brother he was "quick as a weasel." He had "large blue eyes and limpid cheeks . . . very handsome, but too slight for a boy; lively, very funny, all good nature and full of mischief." Thus his grandmother wrote of him to her daughter, who was looking upon equally attractive pictures of Princess Victoria, growing up in Kensington Palace.

The Duke of Kent had become an adoring father. The Duchess had also settled into the English picture, and the clever, warm-hearted grandmother in Coburg had every reason to feel contented, especially when her imagination played about an idea which led her to write of Albert: "The little fellow is the pendant to the pretty cousin."

The Duke of Kent died in 1820, and the peace of the family in England was destroyed. His last breath was a prayer that God

might protect his wife and child and forgive all the sins he had committed.

The Dowager Duchess of Coburg sighed because of the unhappiness in England, but the immediate scene was so merry and pleasant that her depression did not last very long. Albert drove with her in her carriage, saying: "Albert is going with grand-mamma," and holding out his hand so that she might kiss it. She thought him "lovely as a little angel, with his fair curls." Sometimes he rebelled, but "a grave face" made the little fellow submit. He pored over a picture book of Saxon Princes and he "made wonderful eyes" when he discovered that one of them was also named Albert.

### *Chapter Three*

1820-1831

There were two babies in the nursery at Coburg, but the duties of being a mother did not depress Louise. In the summer, when the trees were so green and the flowers so gay, she danced with joy, while her dour husband tramped through the forest in search of game, more in love with the hills and hunting than the subdued entertainments of the stuffy Empire rooms of the palace.

In July of 1820, one of the ladies-in-waiting was guilty of what the young Duchess described as "a stupidity beyond all bounds." "You will laugh when you hear it," she wrote to Augusta von Studnitz, "but it has made me cry. She accused me of loving Count Solms and scolded him because he was in love with me. It made him die of laughter." The Ladies repeated the story to the Duke. "If he had been sensible, he would have laughed also, but he took it seriously, and was angry with me. We talked about it and it all ended in tears. . . . Now he watches me, which he has never done before . . . and he misconstrues everything. . . . How is it possible, dear Augusta, that people can thus have such fancies . . . and make such thrusts?"

Louise was lonely, in spite of her protests, and she was innocently entranced one day when a good-looking, seventeen-year-old boy lay at her feet, and climbed apple trees to look into her window. He did a thousand pretty and amorous things which amused her. While her husband was hunting in the hills and philandering in the town, she stayed at home, lulled into a false security by the adoration of all who came near her. Her husband's suspicions and neglect brought their own punishment, and, when Prince Albert was little more than five years old, the Duchess Louise fell in love with an officer in the Coburg Battalion.

The documents now preserved in the archives in Coburg show that the Duchess was divorced on a charge of having committed adultery with Lieutenant von Hanstein, whom she afterwards married. She neither denied nor admitted the charge against her. There exists no fragment of evidence in the letters written by either enemies or friends to prove that she was unfaithful until the princes were grown children.

There are several printed documents which state that the infidelity of the Duchess brought Semitic blood into the royal family. In 1921, a statement was made by Herr Max W. L. Voss, in his book, *England als Erzieher*: "Prince Albert of Coburg, the Prince Consort, is to be described without contradiction as a half Jew, so that, since his time, Jewish blood has been circulating in the veins of the English Royal Family, as well as the veins of the Hohenzollerns." While such extravagant statements are in print, the evidence of the letters of the Duchess Louise is of vital importance to the history of the succession. Lytton Strachey, in his *Queen Victoria*, refers thus to the divorce: "There were scandals: one of the Court Chamberlains, a charming and cultivated man, of Jewish extraction, was talked of."

Even if Lieutenant von Hanstein had been of Jewish extraction, the letters of Louise, the diaries of her mother-in-law and the most confidential family letters and papers preserved at Coburg, remove all possible doubt as to Prince Albert's legitimacy and purity of blood.

Louise made no counter-charge against her husband. She accepted the judgment of the Court and faced the pitiful moment when she appeared before the people for the last time, with tears in her eyes. "Don't damn me completely—go on loving me," she pleaded to her friend. "I have sacrificed everything, but don't let me lose your friendship!"

Louise had gone to Rosenau. Ernest was at another castle, a few miles away. The people of Coburg loved the Duchess and many of them walked out to Rosenau to see her. When she stepped into her carriage, the peasants forced their way through the hedges and railings and harnessed themselves to the shafts, to draw her into the town. "Their love was most touching," she wrote, "for they were all armed." As the carriage whirled through the streets, the women on the pavements cried. Louise came to the castle and went out on to a balcony, to wave her white scarf in farewell. The people saw that she was crying. "Let us fetch the Duke," they shouted. "We wish to see them together. They must be reconciled. We wish to have unity and peace in the dynasty."

The attempt at reconciliation failed. The Duchess signed the separation papers and went away. "Leaving my children was the

most painful thing of all," she wrote. "They have whooping cough and said, 'Mamma cries because she has got to go, now, when we are ill.' The poor lambs, God bless them." And then, "The Duke was friendly towards me. We came to an understanding and parted with tears, for life. I am more sorry for him than for myself."

Seven months after she left Coburg, Louise was married to Alexander von Hanstein who was created Count von Polzig. There are few letters to tell of the story from this time. Once, Louise pleaded with her friend in Gotha, "Speak sometimes with Prince Leopold about me. I would not like him to forget me altogether." She was anxious lest her children no longer spoke of her. Her step-mother wrote, "I told her that it was impossible for them to forget their mother, but that they were not told how much she suffered, for this would make them suffer also."

In March of 1831, Louise went to see Marie Taglioni dance, in Paris. During the performance she fainted and had to be carried from the theatre. Louise faded gently and in August she dictated her last message to her maid: "The feeling that my strength is sinking every hour and that perhaps this illness will end only with my death induces me to make one more request to my deeply loved husband." She referred to Count von Polzig, who was apparently not with her at this time. "If it is God's wish to call me away in Paris, I wish my body to be taken to Germany, to my husband's estate, in case he intends to live there in future. Should he choose another place, I beg to be taken there. I was happy to have lived by his side, but if death is going to part us, I wish my body at least to be near him."<sup>1</sup>

On the last day of the month, a lady-in-waiting leaned over Louise and said, "Does Your Highness recognise me? Your Highness knows who I am?"

Louise smiled, bowed her head, and then she died.

<sup>1</sup> This wish was not granted. The burial was in Coburg.

## *Chapter Four*

1825-1827

At Kensington, the "bright pretty little girl of seven" was growing up, self-willed but enchanting. "I was naturally very passionate, but always most contrite afterwards," she recollects, when she was older. Her character was already as clear-cut as when she was old upon her throne. She treated servants and the poor with gentle charity, but she could be ruthless with anybody of authority who came near her. When she saw an old man standing beneath a tree, sheltering from the rain, she called one of the servants and said: "Run to that poor man with an umbrella; he is very old and will catch cold." But when her music teacher used the word "must" to her, she locked the lid of the piano and assured him that there was no such thing as "must."

Although the Queen recalled her "melancholy childhood" when she was older, Charles Knight wrote an engaging picture of Kensington in his *Passages of a Working Life*. He delighted to walk in Kensington Gardens and "in such a season, when the sun was scarcely high enough to have dried up the dews of Kensington's green alleys," he passed along the broad central walk and "saw a group on the lawn before the Palace" which, to his mind, was "a vision of exquisite loveliness."

"The Duchess of Kent and her daughter, whose years then numbered eight, are breakfasting in the open air, a single page attending on them at a respectful distance. The matron is looking on with eyes of love, while the fair, soft English face is bright with smiles. The world of fashion is not yet astir."

The Princess's spurts of temper and self-will were not frequent enough to disturb the prettiness of the picture, but they made her mother's letters to Coburg vastly amusing. Her wilfulness was tempered by a directness and honesty which made it easy to train her. One morning, her tutor asked her mother how the Princess had behaved in the nursery. The Duchess confessed that there had been a storm the day before. But the child interrupted: ". . . two storms, one at dressing and one at washing." There were more stories of her watering the plants in the garden, and dividing the contents of the water-pot between the flowers and her own little

feet, than there were of her indulging her temper. Indeed, there was an air of piety and gloom about the discipline in which she lived. The Duchess was for ever haunted by the bogey of her daughter's Hanoverian blood, and the stories of the King's peccadilloes at Windsor.

Albert was left to the care of his Uncle Leopold and his two grandmothers, who adored him. The princes had been taken away from the nursery and Florschütz had come to be their tutor. Albert was four years old, but still "so young and little" that he willingly allowed his tutor to carry him upstairs. Albert disliked nurses, and he attached himself to his new instructor with all the warmth of his nature. In his recollections, Florschütz has written of his own "just and honest pride" because the friendship endured to the last moment of the Prince's life. It seems that Florschütz was a wise and patient man, for both princes learned much from him. The tutor has said that the princes went hand in hand in all things, whether at work or at play. Engaging in the same pursuits, sharing the same joys and the same sorrows, they were bound to each other by uncommon feelings of mutual love.

But there was a sharp difference in their dispositions. Ernest was physically active, without imagination and obedient to his younger brother in most things. He had all the normal male characteristics, while Albert was fanciful, sympathetic and inclined to self-analysis and sadness. Although he was "rather delicate than robust," he was "remarkable for his powers of perseverance and endurance. . . . To do *something* was with him a necessity." In his games with his brother and his young companions, his was the directing mind.

When Albert was six years old, he began a journal.

"1825, 21st January. When I got up this morning, I was very happy; I washed myself, and then was dressed; after which I played for a little while, then the milk was brought, and afterwards dear Papa came to fetch us to breakfast. After breakfast dear Papa showed us the English horses. The little white one can trot very fast, but the chestnut one is rather clumsy."

"... Now I am sleepy, I will pray and go to bed."

23rd January. ". . . When I woke this morning I was ill. My

cough was worse. I was so frightened that I cried. . . . I did a little drawing, then I built a castle and arranged my arms; after that I did my lessons and made a little picture and painted it. Then I played with Noah's Ark. Then we dined, and I went to bed and prayed."

*26th January.* ". . . We recited and I cried because I could not say my repetition, for I had not paid attention. . . . I was not allowed to play after dinner, because I had cried whilst repeating."

*11th February.* "I was to recite something, but I did not wish to do so; that was not right, naughty! . . ."

*28th February.* "I cried at my lesson to-day, because I could not find a verb: and the Rath [his tutor] pinched me to show me what a verb was. And I cried about it. . . ."

*4th April.* ". . . After dinner we went with dear Papa to Ketschendorf. There I drank beer and had bread and butter and cheese. . . ."

*9th April.* ". . . I got up well and happy. Afterwards I had a fight with my brother."

*10th April.* ". . . I had another fight with my brother: that was not right."

A little time afterwards, he wrote to his father: "Our finches have such a fine house to live in. Think of me very often and bring me a doll that nods its head. Your little Albert."

His frequent tears were part of his shyness. He disliked visits from strangers and would run to the corner of the room and cover his face with his hands. Nor was it possible to make him look up, or speak a word. On one occasion, at a children's fancy dress ball, when he was dressed as Cupid, a little girl was chosen as his partner. Nobody could induce him to stir, and his loud screams echoed through the rooms.

The neighbouring Duchy of Gotha was added to the estates of Coburg in 1826, and in November, Duke Ernest rode into the town with his two sons. After this, Albert and his tutor went to Gotha for a part of every year, but Rosenau and the palace in the town of Coburg continued to be the important background of his childhood.

Albert sometimes went up to the old ruined castle on the hill, along the grey, dusty roads, which wound up between rich trees

and meadows. A boy with the blood of soldiers and princes in his veins must have loved the high fortress, with its old green guns, its lime-tree beneath which Luther had sat, its ramparts hung with red creeper and the succession of rooms and halls, imbued with legend. He could stand on the ramparts and look out towards the forest: a black river of trees, flowing over the hills. On one side was a ruined tower and on the other a castle. In the summer, Coburg was the loveliest place in all Thuringia. The wild pigeons that came from Scandinavia flew over the towers, towards the fields in which the harvesters were working. Within the castle was Luther's room, with his table and his Bible and his stained manuscript.

There were birthdays, with parties for a thousand children, eating cake and sausages, playing on the large meadow and jumping about like grasshoppers. Ernest and Albert would appear in full armour, and their Uncle Leopold would stand on a platform to receive them. Ernest would stammer forth a short address, in which he thanked his kind uncle for having come across the sea to spend the festival with them.

Sometimes the princes went to stay with their grandmother in Gotha. She smiled upon them and found Albert more handsome than ever. He breakfasted with her and she allowed him to go to the opera. "I have gratified their ardent wish to have another goat," she wrote, "which has been sent to-day. I entreat that they may be allowed to keep them all three. . . . Albert wishes to drive the little goat. Happy children! How much are they to be envied for the power of being pleased with so little. . . . Do not let them take much medicine nor hear much about their health. It only makes them nervous."

The English newspapers arrived in Coburg and the Dowager Duchess read of Princess Victoria going on to Virginia Water with the King. "The little monkey must have pleased and amused him," we read, "she is such a pretty, clever child."

Victoria had pleased and amused her "large and gouty" Uncle William, who had said: "Give me your little paw." She had asked for "God Save the King" as her favourite piece of music, and she had told him that what she had enjoyed most during her stay was "the drive I took with you, Uncle King."

It was about this time that she asked her nurse: "Why do all gentlemen raise their hats to me and not to Feodora?" Lehzen, the trusted and obdurate German governess who watched the child so carefully, thought this a suitable moment to let her into the secret. She told Victoria how near she was to the throne.

1828-1831

When Albert was older, he learned to ride his English ponies up into the forest, where larch and fir trees rose above the myriads of pungent brown and yellow toadstools. The forest was quiet, with gold light between the trees, and wood piles between which little girls gathered mushrooms in baskets. He travelled to the distant corners of Germany and down the green Rhine. He collected geological specimens and he bent over the desk in his schoolroom, high under the sloping roof of Ehrenburg. He was a student by nature. "I don't understand people making a business of shooting and going out for the whole day," he said.

As the horizon of Albert's life extended, so his character grew. He overcame his temptation to cry and the childish quarrels with his brother gave place to a friendship which did not suffer for the difference in their natures.

Albert developed a character which was almost too near perfection. Count Mensdorff wrote of him: "It was only what he thought unjust or dishonest that could make him angry. One day he was playing at Rosenau with boys of his own age. Some of them were to storm the old ruined tower on the side of the castle, which the others were to defend. One of the boys suggested that there was a place at the back by which they could get in without being seen, and thus capture it without difficulty. But Albert declared that this would be most unbecoming in a Saxon Knight, who should always attack the enemy in front. So they fought for the tower, honestly and vigorously, and the virtuous boy became so lively with the spirit of the battle that he gave his cousin a blow upon the nose.

"Albert never was noisy or wild. . . . He had a natural talent for imitation and a great sense of the ludicrous, either in persons or things: but he was never silly or ill-natured. . . . From his earliest infancy, he was distinguished for perfect moral purity both in word

and in deed. . . . Whilst still very young, his heart was feelingly alive to the sufferings of the poor. I saw him one day give a beggar something by stealth, when he told me not to speak of it; 'for when you give to the poor,' he said, 'you must see that nobody knows of it.' " But there was humour to brighten his story and when he acted proverbs, "There was a good deal of fun and laughter. . . . Albert as a quack, with a pigtail and paunch was too ridiculous."

Florschütz recalled Albert's love of fun and practical jokes. On one occasion he was scolded by his father for "getting his instructor in chemistry to fill a number of small glass vessels, about the size of a pea, with sulphurated hydrogen, which he threw about the floor of the pit and boxes of the theatre, to the great annoyance and discomfiture of the audience, at whose confusion he was highly delighted."

Albert often straightened his back and frowned upon the misdemeanours of his contemporaries. When he was six, he raised the funds to rebuild the house of a poor man who had lost his possessions in a fire. When he was ten, he was sitting in a beer garden with his brother, when the waiter caught his wig on the branch of a tree. Everybody laughed: everybody but Albert, who stood up and denounced the other boys for their cruelty.

It was about this time that Albert made his first gesture towards his future bride. He wrote a letter in which he sent his "best remembrances to our dear Cousin."

Towards the end of 1831, the Dowager Duchess of Coburg died, and her lively and intelligent help was withdrawn from Albert's life. His Uncle Leopold had also gone away. By this time, Leopold's talents had impressed all Europe. He had refused the Crown of Greece, but he had accepted the Crown of the Belgians and was now living in Brussels. Albert was alone with his father, his brother and his tutor. Florschütz was a conscientious and affectionate man and his recollections show us that he gave many years of his life to the improvement in body and mind of his Prince—to his "advance in health, usefulness and goodness." Usefulness and goodness came to him easily, but his health sometimes made his tutor nervous. "I shall never forget," he says, "the gentle goodness, the affectionate patience he showed when suffering under slight feverish attacks.

His heart seemed then to open to the whole world. . . . He displayed a temper and disposition which I may characterise as being, in thought and in deed, perfectly angelic. I cannot recall these recollections, even now, without the deepest emotion."

Prince Albert's father fades slowly out of the story. He was married again, to Princess Mary of Württemberg, but there was no romance in the marriage, for they lived apart for a great deal of the time. There were misunderstandings between the Duchess and her step-child. Albert's own mother had erred on the side of affectionate leniency, but his step-mother upbraided him for inconstancy. "You think of me no more, you do not love me properly, and you do not consider my advice as being well-intentioned," she wrote to him. He pleaded in answer: "This doubt of our enormous love for you, and our gratitude, downright affection and care, cannot do otherwise than disturb us. . . . I do not know how we can possibly have earned this." Yet she did not even attend the Confirmation of the princes, in 1835. A contemporary account says that "she could not venture on the journey from Gotha to Coburg at this inclement season."

Albert became the child of three foster-fathers: his Uncle Leopold, Florschütz his tutor, and Baron Stockmar.

Stockmar had been a doctor in Coburg, where he was born. His son tells us that he had a "straightforward understanding . . . a sober habit of observation . . . he united deep feeling, good nature, and love of mankind." But he had clear-cut opinions and beliefs, and the diligence and imagination to work for those beliefs with tremendous zeal. Although so many contemporaries wrote of "the dear Baron," and of the pious unselfishness which inspired him, there is no doubt that he sacrificed many ethical misgivings to the success of his cause. He believed in One United Germany. He was the friend of kings—the contributor to the greatness of others. "I seem to be here to care more for others than for myself, and am well content with this destiny," he wrote to his sister Caroline. His zeal was sometimes overpowering, and it was tempered only by his ill health. "It is good that you are so often ill," said an old friend, "or there would be no bearing your exuberant spirits."

His friend, King Leopold, was handsome, with charming manners and wide and varied talents. He had the ruling genius of the

Coburgs, in fullest measure. Leopold and Stockmar were bound together by mutual interests. They trusted each other. Their friendship had been sealed in a promise, willingly shared, at the death-bed of Princess Charlotte. Stockmar had written of Leopold in this moment, "kneeling by her bed, he kissed her cold hands, and then raising himself up, he pressed me to him and said: 'I am now quite desolate. Promise me always to stay with me.'"

Stockmar made the promise and kept it, although he was obliged to desert his own wife and children in Coburg for the greater part of every year so that he might stay with his master. Leopold had lost his one chance of ruling England as the Consort of a Queen. The next best plan was to train another prince of Coburg to take his place. In Stockmar, he had his greatest ally. He was a scholar and his triumphs were in his own mind. He did not covet his master's glory.

These were the two men, with no shadows of doubt or jealousy in their friendship, who joined with Florschütz to design Prince Albert's future. They were ambitious for him and they were fond of him, but they were ambitious also for the glory of the Coburgs. Leopold and Stockmar took Albert as an impressionable boy in his teens and made of him the most virtuous and unselfish prince of his century. From the beginning, the more sensitive side of his character remained a secret to himself, and he accepted the educational strait-jacket without protest.

About this time, King Leopold wrote: "Albert is a fine young fellow, well grown for his age, with agreeable and valuable qualities; and who, if things go well, may, in a few years, turn out a strong, handsome man, of a kindly, simple, yet dignified demeanour. Externally, therefore, he possesses all that pleases the sex, and at all times and in all countries must please. It may prove, too, a lucky circumstance, that even now he has something of an English look."

Leopold's next concern was Albert's mind. He wrote: "On this point, too, one hears much to his credit. . . . He is said to be circumspect, discreet, and even now cautious. But all this is not enough. He ought to have not merely great ability, but a right ambition, and great force of will as well." Leopold was almost merciless in showing the boy his line of duty. He demanded an

"earnest frame of mind, which is ready of its own accord to sacrifice mere pleasure to real usefulness." He wrote of the English plan, "If he does not, from the very outset, accept it as a vocation of grave responsibility, on the efficient fulfilment of which his honour and happiness depend, there is small likelihood of his succeeding."

Princess Victoria also accepted her uncle's advice. He thought many Englishmen to be "humbugs and deceivers," and he warned her against hypocrisy, "a besetting sin of all times." He urged her to "self-examination . . . every evening to recapitulate the events of the day and the motives which made one act oneself, as well as to try to guess what might have been the motives of others." He warned her against selfishness and vanity. "Nothing is so great and clear a proof of unfitness for great and noble occasions," he wrote, "than a mind which is seriously occupied with trifles."

## *Chapter Five*

1835-1836

Religion must have been instinct in Prince Albert, for his life was guided by a spirituality far beyond the formal piety in which he was instructed. His tutor wrote that he had "a real and living faith, giving colour to his whole life"—that religion was "part of himself." "It was engrafted in his very nature."

No experience could have been less in sympathy with this "real and living faith" than Prince Albert's Confirmation. The forbidding examination was made in the presence of his relatives, the heads of the government departments and deputations from the diet, the clergy, and the surrounding towns and villages. They crowded into the marble ante-room and into the ornate Giant's Hall, where Louise had danced in such happiness, as a bride. The sober auditors pricked up their ears to catch the nervous answers which Prince Albert and Prince Ernest made to the examinee. The questions "were carefully considered, in order to give the audience a clear insight into the views and feelings of the young Princes." The relatives and deputees were deeply moved when Prince Ernest said, "I and my brother are firmly resolved ever to remain faithful to the acknowledged truth." The examination lasted an hour, and when Prince Albert stepped down from the altar, he had the curious satisfaction of knowing that the most personal religious experience of his life had been shared with the officials and representatives of every class of his father's people.

Princess Victoria's Confirmation was less formal. She had been led up to the altar by the King. Her mother had wept, the King had "frequently shed tears" and the little Princess had been "drowned in tears and frightened to death."

King William was allowed to see his niece on such important occasions, but the Duchess of Kent continued to guard her daughter from full knowledge of her uncles and their ways. The Duchess agreed with Stockmar that William the Fourth was "in no way distinguished, either in character or intelligence," and she used her will to establish a separate relationship between her child and the British people, no matter what comments might be made at Windsor. Princess Victoria matured under relentless discipline.

When she bent her head at the table, the Duchess pinned a sprig of holly to the neck of her dress so that if her chin relaxed it would be pricked and punished. The different lives of Windsor and Kensington went on, in enmity and open insult. Neither the King's indignation nor the Duchess's determination ever relaxed and their antagonism culminated "in a painful scene" at a State banquet at Windsor, when William IV made a speech in which he referred to the Duchess as "that person." She was sitting near to him, and she had to listen to his attacks upon her advisers and to his threats that he would insist upon seeing more of Princess Victoria at Court. The Princess was also at the table and she burst into tears. The Duchess was silent, but when dinner was over, she ordered her carriage and "was with difficulty prevailed upon to remain at Windsor for the night." It was in this world of untidy manners and animosity that Princess Victoria learned her first lessons of the hazards and perplexities of a sovereign's life.

Prince Albert's training was equally disciplined, but he lived in less distressing circumstances. In 1836, he went to Brussels, to be instructed under his uncle's direct supervision. His horizon now spread far beyond the dark forests of Thuringia and the gardens of Rosenau, but his methodical education continued. He had just finished an essay on the *Mode of Thought of the Germans*, and he was busy writing letters to the Director of the High School at Coburg. "I intend immediately to study and to follow the thoughts of the great Klopstock, into their depths," he wrote. "I often think back, with the greatest pleasure, of the interesting hours spent with you at Coburg; with what pleasure my ear took in your praises of our German masters."

King Leopold had established his throne in Belgium and the people were already prosperous under his liberal rule. When he had set his own house in order, he was able to look beyond his kingdom. In England, his sister and her daughter were awakening the affections of the people, in spite of the antagonism of the King. In Coburg, Stockmar and Florschütz had fallen in with his plans and they had trained Albert accordingly. He was almost ready to sit beside the English Princess upon the throne which was promised her.

There was no end to Leopold's ambitions, and there were few.

limits to his talents. He may have known a happy spell when he married Princess Charlotte and a terrible moment when she died, but he was a harder man now. Although he was a foster-father to both Victoria and Albert, this office was never allowed to interfere with his ambitions. The plan for their marriage had been so long in growing, and he had tended it so carefully that it could not fail. He realised this when he suggested that Albert should go to England to meet Princess Victoria in 1836. Prince Albert accepted his uncle's plan and he travelled to London in June.

Six princes had already sought Victoria's hand. Creevey had watched her dancing with the young King of Portugal and the busy gossip had noted that the King was never so happy as when talking to his cousin. Then he had added: "What would I give to hear of their elopment in a *cab!*" Neither the King of Portugal nor the five other suitors touched Victoria's heart.

Prince Albert sailed down the Rhine, carrying his English grammar book with him and improving his conversation by talking to any stray Englishman he met. He arrived in England in June, together with his father and his brother. King William was rampant. He vowed that the Saxe-Coburgs should never put foot in the country, that they should go back whence they came, and, as a gesture, he invited the Prince of Orange and his two sons to come to London at the same time. William the Fourth was unwise to pit his wits against those of the King of the Belgians. Leopold had already wooed his niece's sympathy in a clever letter. Had not slavery been abolished in the British colonies? he asked. Why should the King keep her, "a white little slavey, for the pleasure of the Court," when he had never "spent a sixpence" for her existence.

The Saxe-Coburg Princes came in spite of the King's temper. Albert was seventeen and he was the fairest Prince in Europe. Victoria found her cousins to be most delightful young people ". . . . evry amiable, very kind and good, and extremely merry, just as young people should be." She was delighted with them, but she could not forget that duty had inspired their visit and that if romance should awaken, it would be a happy accident. Perhaps she thought of this, for after she had described them as *merry*, she added that they were *extremely sensible and very fond of occupation*.

They sat on the sofa and turned over the pages of a book of drawings, they danced and walked together, and they displayed their talents upon the pianoforte. She decided that Albert was "extremely handsome," and added that Ernest was "certainly not." She wrote jolly letters to her uncle and she confided in him that she was in every way delighted with the prospect of great happiness in the person of *dear Albert*. She wrote, "Allow me then, my dearest Uncle, to tell you how delighted I am with him and how much I like him in every way. He possesses every quality that could be desired to make me perfectly happy."

It was not easy for Prince Albert to show his emotions. The dreamy boy who had pasted pictures upon the walls of the summer-house in the Rosenau garden was now aloof and his manners were ordered and cold. Florschütz and Leopold and Stockmar had given him an armour in which he was no longer able to bend. He had not been brought up to expect love or romance. He was affectionate, grateful and contented, but seldom more than this.

Princess Victoria was different. With all her mother's discipline and her uncle's advice, she remained half Hanoverian, and she loved dancing and entertainments and the colour of existence. Also, she was romantic. Albert came to her in the name of duty, but this did not prevent her from seeing in him a prince as fair as any in a story book.

Princess Victoria was not pretty, but she was attractive, with a small fair head well set on pretty shoulders. She had the charms of a bright smile and a clear musical voice. It was through her voice that the pleasure-loving Hanoverian expressed itself so deliciously. Her laugh was rippling and joyous, and it remained so, even when she was old.

Princess Victoria did her best to entertain Albert while he was in London. But he yawned at night, because he never could stay up late without feeling sleepy. He found the King's levée long and fatiguing, and it was a little tiresome having to stay up until two o'clock, for a concert, after he had dined at Court. "You can well imagine," he wrote to his step-mother, "that I had many hard battles to fight against sleepiness during these late entertainments."

He was grateful, even if his aloofness made it impossible for him to be more. For her part, Victoria was almost in love. On the last

morning before the princes went away, she came downstairs to find Albert playing the pianoforte, before breakfast. It was already Albert who amused and pleased her most. He was the more reflecting of the two. He always had a joke to make her laugh—some clever, witty answer. But on this last morning she did not laugh. She "cried bitterly, very bitterly." She wrote to Leopold when she was once more alone: "I have only now to beg you, my dearest Uncle, to take care of the health of one now so dear to me and to take him under your special protection. I hope and trust that all will go on prosperously and well on this subject now of so much importance to me."

Albert did not say more than that he thought Victoria "very amiable."

## *Chapter Six*

1836-1837

For almost a year after their visit to England, the Princes lived with King Leopold in Brussels. Diligent study, modern languages and history filled the months before they went to the university at Bonn. Albert was reluctant to leave his books when he was asked to shoot sea-gulls or to watch military field days with his uncle. It seemed that he was afraid of leisure. The sense of duty which killed him twenty-five years later was already consuming him. When his father summoned him to Coburg for Christmas, he answered, "I am afraid we must deny ourselves that pleasure. Such an expedition would require five or six weeks and our course of study would be quite disturbed."

Baron Stockmar thought intensely and he enquired far before he recommended Bonn University for Albert's further education. He dismissed Berlin as a school in which he might become "formal and priggish." Prince Albert enjoyed his freedom at Bonn and some of his boyhood playfulness came to life again. He mimicked his professors and he caricatured his tutors. He still "liked above all things, to discuss questions of public law and metaphysics," and when he walked with his friend Prince Löwenstein, they discussed "juridical principles or philosophical doctrines." But the Prince unbent now and then. His memory enabled him to produce entire sentences from the professors' lectures, in character, to the amusement of the other students. Prince Löwenstein recalled this talent many years afterwards and added that the Prince's good taste prevented him from ever offending the professors with his imitations.

An Englishman who was in Bonn at the same time as the Princes wrote a book on his experiences, signing himself "A Member of the Middle Temple." He described the "costly banquets" given by the Princes "to parties of between twenty and thirty students, selected entirely for their personal worth and talents." He added: "The Princes themselves could hardly be said to partake of the rare luxuries provided for the occasion, so rigidly temperate were they both, and more especially Prince Albert." The depressing record of virtue says that "No prince that has ever lived could stand less in

need of exhortations to good deeds, or of admonitions against bad ones than Prince Albert."

Princess Victoria was able to observe the progress of her cousin, through the many letters which were sent to her from Brussels and Coburg. She was more independent now and she was enjoying her freedom, among less censorious companions. She was already aware of the dangers of too much discipline and when she wrote to her uncle of her "good cousins," she hinted that he might encourage them to take more exercise and not to devote all their time to their books.

As the Princess became used to her independence, her mother became a sad and lonely woman. She had devoted seventeen years of her life to one great object. She had worked hand in glove with her brother, King Leopold, to establish a Coburg dynasty in Britain, and she was near to realising her ambition. Now her daughter began to use her will to revolt against the curriculum which had formed her mind. A menacing sign of this divergence between mother and daughter came when King William offered Princess Victoria ten thousand pounds a year, independent of the authority of the Duchess. The offer was accepted and, although the King died before the arrangement could affect his relationship with his niece, the Duchess was vexed by the new assurance of her daughter's freedom.

Many writers have enlarged upon the enmity between the Duchess of Kent and Princess Victoria during the closing months of King William's reign. The Duchess had been unwise in choosing her advisers and the King's rude protest during the dinner at Windsor was justified in fact. But she had been a lonely woman in an unfriendly country and her weakness in accepting the guidance of such men as Conroy must be condoned. Reflecting upon these matters in later years, Prince Albert wrote that the Duchess would "never have fallen into the hands of Conroy if Uncle Leopold had taken the trouble to guide her." She had to suffer bitterly for her mistakes when her daughter came of age and sat in judgment upon her. Many years were to pass before Prince Albert was able to temper the Queen's disapproval and bring daughter and mother together again.

Now that the Princess was older, King Leopold arranged that

Stockmar should spend most of his time in England. Nothing was to be left to chance. "You have now the Baron at your elbow," Leopold wrote to Victoria. "*Speak sometimes with him; it is necessary to accustom you to the thing.*" Almost every move that she made was advised or ordered by these two men. "Keep your mind cool and easy: be not alarmed at the prospect of becoming, perhaps sooner than you expected, Queen," wrote King Leopold. He added his thankfulness that Stockmar would be with her. His "*judgment, heart and character offer all the guarantee we can wish for.*" The King wrote, naively: "My object is that you should be no one's tool."

Leopold anticipated the death of William IV with explicit instructions, throwing his niece upon the help and trust of Lord Melbourne and assuring her that the Duke of Cumberland, her immediate successor, was "enough to frighten them [the Ministers] into the most violent attachment for you."

William the Fourth died in June of 1837 and Victoria ascended the throne. She had come into the room at five o'clock in the morning, "in a loose white nightgown and shawl, her nightcap thrown off, and her hair falling upon her shoulders . . . tears in her eyes, but perfectly collected and dignified," to be told that she was Queen of England.

It was the occasion for Prince Albert to write his first letter in English. He commented on his "poor Aunt Kent," who had been violently attacked in the newspapers. "Now you are Queen of the mightiest land of Europe," he wrote. "In your hand lies the happiness of millions. . . . I hope that your reign may be long, happy and glorious. . . . May I pray to you to think likewise sometimes of your cousins in Bonn and to continue to them that kindness you favoured them with till now. Be assured that our minds are always with you. I will not be indiscreet and abuse your time. Believe me always, Your Majesty's most obedient and faithful servant, Albert."

During the autumn of 1837, Albert and Ernest travelled through Switzerland and northern Italy. Their boyhood was over. Very soon, Ernest was to go about his business and prepare for the day when he would be Duke of Saxe-Coburg. Albert turned his thoughts towards

England. He sent the young Queen little presents—an autograph of Voltaire and an alpine rose. He talked again and again of the coming separation from Ernest. The moment "in its saddest form" was ever before him, he wrote to Prince Löwenstein. "I shall not set out until Ernest also launches his vessel, so that he may not be left behind. The separation will be frightfully painful to us. Up to this moment, we have never, as far as we can recollect, been a single day away from each other. I cannot bear to think of this moment. . . . I must now give up the custom of saying 'We' and use the 'I' which sounds so egotistical and cold."

Victoria was Queen. Her sudden firmness was surprising and almost terrible. It was inevitable that she should be ruthless and place small sentimentalities on one side in establishing her new position. She drew her "dearly beloved, angelic Lehzen" and her "excellent Lord Melbourne" about her. Lord Melbourne was a man of the world, charming and clever, and embittered by his experience of women. He found himself confronted by a young girl, eager and virtuous, willing to believe in him and willing to respect him. In that lay the key to their relationship. Victoria came to the throne at a time when Melbourne was depressed by his own folly. She gave him back his self-respect when she accepted him as her guide and her friend. In private he was like a father. She was fortunate because there was also the Duke of Wellington, wise and unselfish, to be "very dear and nice" to her. When Lord Melbourne asked her if she had a preference for any individual in England, she had answered: "There is but one person . . . and that is the Duke of Wellington."

The extraordinary change in this first year of her reign was in Victoria's attitude towards her Uncle Leopold and her mother. She was gentle but firm with the Duchess of Kent. The Duchess was given her own rooms in the palace and, in later years, she had separate houses at Windsor and at Balmoral. The young Queen was no less adamant in dealing with her uncle. Her letters to him were affectionate, but she explained, with nice tact, that she would not touch "on certain matters," because she did not wish to change their present delightful and familiar correspondence into a formal and stiff discussion upon politics.

There was resolution behind the Queen's grace. Perhaps she realised that her uncle had worked as much for Coburg's name as for her own happiness. She was a Queen, and Melbourne and the Duke were beside her, giving her their support and affection. She was independent and powerful, and the reasons why she should marry were lessened. A Consort was a person of doubtful powers. She could share her authority with her Ministers, only as much as she chose. She became increasingly jealous of her independence. The sentimental little scene with Albert on the sofa at Kensington was forgotten. "Though all the reports of Albert are most favourable and though I have little doubt I shall like him," she wrote to Leopold, "still one can never answer beforehand for *feelings*, and I may not have the *feeling* for him which is requisite to ensure happiness. I *may* like him as a friend, and as a *cousin*, and as a *brother*, but not *more*; and should this be the case (which is unlikely) I am very anxious that it should be understood that I am not guilty of any breach of promise, for I never gave any."

The cousins were coming to England and Queen Victoria wished to be quite certain that Albert knew that there was no engagement between them. There had grown up in her a "*great repugnance to change*" her position. Freedom was a new and exciting experience, in spite of its responsibilities. She felt too that there was no anxiety in England "for such an event," and she thought it more prudent to wait "till some such demonstration" was shown.

The Queen was naturally gay. She danced "till past three and was much amused." After such a night, she wrote to Lord Melbourne that she was ashamed "of sleeping from four till half past ten." On her birthday, she dancéd until four. "How different to last year! Everybody was so kind and so friendly to me," she wrote.

Prince Albert was already careful and independent in his attitude towards the English plan. When he was told that it would be necessary to postpone the marriage for a few years, he answered: "I am ready to submit to this delay, if I have only some certain assurance to go upon. But if after waiting, perhaps for three years, I should find that the Queen no longer desired the marriage, it would place me in a ridiculous position and would, to a certain extent, ruin all my prospects for the future." Perhaps his pride was hurt by her attitude. Before Victoria came to the throne they

had exchanged affectionate letters, but from the day of her Coronation, she had not written to him again. Albert was in Rome, reluctant to go "into the vortex of society." He "danced, dined, supped, paid compliments," and urged his friend Löwenstein to admire his strength of character in that he never excused himself and never returned home till five in the morning. "I have fairly drained the carnival cup to the dregs," he added. But the carnival jarred against his nature. It was only when he walked away, alone, that he "became at once gay and animated." "Now I can breathe, now I am happy!" he said.

Prince Albert's view of his position at this time was revealed in a letter which he wrote to his tutor, then in Coburg. On July 28th, he wrote from Bonn: "As regards the important plans for the future Papa had a little conversation himself with Victoria, in which she told him, with some slight embarrassment, 'mes intentions sont toujours les mêmes; mais cela [*sic*] ne se pourra que dans deux ou trois ans.' This last sentence was, I think, quite superfluous. There is great danger in the long delay, but the Baroness [Lehzen] relieved Papa's anxiety by saying she thought V. regarded herself as fully pledged. Next summer, after my return from Italy, we are to go over to the green island again with Papa; this is the Queen's wish. Until then, I am to go into society, learn the ways of the world and vitiate my culture with fashionable accomplishments, the last of which would appear to be an extraordinarily good testimonial in V.'s eyes. And I will do it. I will find so much pleasure in a mixture of happiness, impudence, unceremoniousness, trifling chatter on trivial subjects, and come back flinging French, English and Italian expressions about with such fluency that I shall be regarded as the true type of elegant man of the world of the nineteenth century. . . . I shall shudder sometimes when I look at myself in private; but I hope it will be only a veneer which will not corrode the kernel."

Prince Albert added, "V. is said to be incredibly stubborn, and her extreme obstinacy to be constantly at war with her good nature; she delights in court ceremonies, etiquette and trivial formalities. These are gloomy prospects; but they would not be so bad if there were not such a long interval for them to harden, so that it will become impossible to modify them. She is said to

take not the slightest pleasure in nature, to enjoy sitting up at night and sleeping late into the day."

In Florence, he went to the Church of the Badia and there, alone, he played the organ, the music penetrating "the solemn stillness of the Church and cloisters." In other than princely circumstances, his spirit would have been contented if he had been one of the recluses walking there.

Stockmar was with Albert in Italy and he observed him closely. The old doctor recalled the Duchess Louise and said that Albert bore "a striking resemblance to his mother." The likeness was "both physical and mental." In Albert he saw "the same nobility and readiness of mind, the same intelligence, the same over-ruling desire and talent for appearing kind and amiable to others." But according to the Baron, Albert had become lazy, and he grieved over the boy's tendency to spare himself, both mentally and physically. Albert showed not the slightest interest in politics or women. "On the whole," Stockmar complained, "he will always have more success with men than with women, in whose society he shows too little *empreusement*, and is too indifferent and retiring."

While Leopold and Stockmar nursed their plan and while the young Queen was managing her own affairs so spectacularly in England, Albert found the one outlet for his feelings in his letters to his brother. When he returned to his beloved Coburg, he walked along the road between Rosenau and the town. He climbed the hill to the castle and he watched the changing colours in the fields. He wrote to Ernest: "You cannot imagine how empty it seems to me since you left. . . . It is the first separation; it will not be the last. . . . But I console myself with the old saying, there must be a valley between two hills. . . . Do take care of your health." He tied a ribbon about his brother's letters and kept them with him. "Let us do the same with our correspondence as with that of Herr Rath," he wrote, "and bind the letters at the end of the year."

## *Chapter Seven*

1839-1840

King Leopold was anxious when Albert and Ernest left for England. His niece's show of independence made him wonder whether his plan for her marriage was as certain as he had always imagined. He armed Albert with a letter for Queen Victoria in which he described the brothers as "good and honest creatures" deserving of her "kindness." "I recommend them to your *bienveillance*," he wrote. Three years had passed since they first came to see her. The scene then had been within the modest circumstances of Kensington Palace. Now they came to be received by a Sovereign, within the tremendous state of Windsor. The carriage drove down from London, into the courtyard of the castle, and Albert saw Queen Victoria waiting for him, at the top of the stairs. He was not able to dine with her that night as his clothes had miscarried on the way, but he went to the drawing-room after dinner. The first self-conscious moments passed with the help of Lord Melbourne: he leaned over and whispered to the Queen that he was struck with Prince Albert's likeness to her. The evening passed and when the Queen went to her room, she wrote in her diary: "It was with some emotion that I beheld Albert, who is beautiful." Next day horses were brought to the castle steps and the Queen rode with the Princes—a gay cavalcade sweeping through the glades of Windsor forest.

Night after night she went to her room and wrestled with her heart and her independence. It was not until October 14th, 1839, that she summoned Prince Albert to her. Even then, she sent the message through an old servant of the Coburg family. At half past twelve o'clock, Albert went to her closet. The door closed behind him and they were alone. Their shyness made the first moments uneasy for them—the girl of twenty trembled as she said that he must be aware of why she had sent for him, and that it would make her "too happy" if he would consent to what she wished.

She wrote the story in her journal, of how he did not hesitate in giving his answer. He had received her offer with "the greatest demonstration of kindness and affection." "He is perfection in every way, in beauty, in everything," she wrote. "I told him I was

quite unworthy of him. He said he would be very happy to spend his life with me. How I will strive to make him feel as little as possible the great sacrifice he has made!"

With pretty impetuosity, she wrote to her uncle: "I love him more than I can say, and shall do everything in my power to render this sacrifice as small as I can. He seems to have great tact—a very necessary thing in his position. These last few days have passed like a dream to me. . . ." In her excitement she wrote letter after letter. The world had to be told the wonderful news. The Queen of England was in love! But she was also a little ashamed. In the years that followed, she wrote of her indignation against herself for having kept Albert waiting for so long.

Prince Albert had also been ruffled by the delay. He told the Queen that if she had not decided then, he could not have waited. He went to her "with the quiet but firm resolution to declare, that on his part, he was tired of the delay, and would withdraw entirely from the affair." He made one charming gesture. He gave the Queen a pin which he had received from his mother when he was a child. "Victoria is so good and kind to me," he wrote, "that I am often at a loss to believe that such affection should be shown to me." He wrote to Herr Florschütz: "I have attained the height of my desire. . . . Alas, my days in my beloved home are numbered."

King Leopold was so happy over the success of his scheme that he said that he had almost the feeling of old Simeon: "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace."

The Queen became radiant because of the love which flowered within her. Just as Albert was quiet and restrained, so was she caught up in an ecstasy, which increased from day to day. "I am so bewildered by it all, that I hardly know how to write; but I do feel *very very* happy. . . . I do so adore Albert! He is quite an angel, and so *very very* kind to me, and seems so fond of me. . . . I cannot bear to part from him."

Stockmar and Leopold enjoyed their triumph. The Hanoverians were back in Herrenhausen, whence they had come, and half of Europe was under the influence of Coburg Princes. Stockmar could not let the occasion pass without sending his pupil a long letter of advice. Albert sent his answer, but it was not a bridegroom's letter. He talked of *nobility* and *resolution* and *courage*. "In regulating my

actions, good advice is the one thing needful; and that you can give me better than anyone, if you will only make up your mind to sacrifice your time to me, at least for the first year of my being here." Albert was afraid. He wrote to his stepmother in Gotha: "My future position will have its dark sides and the sky will not always be blue and unclouded. Oh, the future!" he wrote. "Does it not bring with it the moment when I shall have to take leave of my dear, dear home, and of you?" He wrote of melancholy. When he returned to Coburg he gathered his letters together, his books and the little valueless souvenirs of his childhood. There was no ecstasy in his letters. "I think I shall be very happy, for Victoria possesses all the qualities which make a home happy, and seems to be attached to me with her whole heart," he wrote. Of his own feelings he said little. "My future lot is high and brilliant, but also plentifully strewn with thorns." He added: "While I shall be untiring in my efforts and labours for the country to which I shall in future belong . . . I shall never cease to be a true German, a true Coburg and Gotha man."

On November 23rd, with Prince Albert's picture set within a bracelet upon her arm, the Queen faced eighty-three members of the Privy Council at Buckingham Palace and told them that she was betrothed. She felt her "hands shake," but she "did not make one mistake." Croker described the feminine delicacy with which she read the declaration and her voice, "clear and untroubled," her eye "bright and calm, neither bold nor downcast, but firm and soft. There was a blush on her cheek."

When she drove away from London to Windsor, the people crowded about the Palace gates to cheer her. She passed them, radiant and bowing. Albert's "dear picture" was upon her hand.

The announcement of the betrothal was simple, but a hundred troubles arose in its wake. Prince Albert's position was almost unique and the Queen was anxious as to what rank he should assume. There was no precedent to guide her. There had been only Anne's "very stupid and insignificant husband" who had been made into a peer. Albert was determined not to accept an English title, nor would he renounce all claims to Coburg. If his brother

Ernest died without children, the ducal crown would come to him.

On January 16th, the Queen opened Parliament and announced her engagement from the throne. A labyrinth of intrigues was set up. The Tories pointed out that the word "Protestant" had not been mentioned in the announcement and there were rumours that Prince Albert was a Catholic. The Queen wrote to him hastily. "A few stupid people here try to say you are a Catholic: but nobody will believe it." But she asked for a short history of the House of Coburg and Albert was obliged to set down his credentials and to show that there had not been a "single Catholic Princess introduced into the Coburg family since the appearance of Luther." The mistrust annoyed him and he searched through his papers for the confession of faith which he had made for his Confirmation. He translated it and sent it to Victoria so that she was able to assure the nervous Anglicans that he was "particularly Protestant in his opinions." Malicious and ignorant questions were hurled at Lord Palmerston and he, in his turn, wrote to Stockmar, asking him whether Prince Albert belonged to any sect, "the tenets of which could prevent him from partaking of the Lord's Supper, according to the rites of the Church of England." Stockmar reassured him and this doubt was set at rest.

The Government then wrestled over the question of Prince Albert's annuity. As he walked about the gardens or made expeditions into the country about Coburg, he was pestered and troubled by impudent questions from England. In the matter of the annuity it was Stockmar who soothed the British politicians. In the House, Lord John Russell lost his temper "and flung dirt at Peel, like a sulky boy flinging rotten eggs," and Greville, who made this note, in commenting on the reduction of the Prince's allowance from fifty thousand to thirty thousand pounds a year, added: "There was something mean and sordid in squabbling for what money they could get."

"Do what one will, nothing will please these Tories," Victoria wrote to her uncle. What horrified her most was the attitude of the Duke of Wellington. Her old friend had opposed her and it was a long time before she forgave him. Indeed, it was with great difficulty that she was "induced to invite him to her wedding," and the "busy mischief-makers and angry Tories" told the Duke that she had said: "I won't have that old rebel."

The Queen poured her troubles into her letters to Albert. "The English are very jealous of any foreigner interfering in the government of this country," she wrote. But she struggled valiantly to gain him some sort of position. She urged that he should be given precedence over the Hanoverian Princes and this aroused a fresh political storm which reached its full strength when she added that she wished to insert his name in the Liturgy. The Queen was in despair: everybody seemed to be making plots to spoil her love-story. Albert consoled her when he wrote: "All I have to say is that while I possess your love, they cannot make me unhappy."

Lord Melbourne wished George Anson to be Albert's private secretary. This news was also carried to the Prince in a letter. He sat down at his desk in Coburg and wrote that he wished *all* appointments to be non-political. He knew that Anson had already been Melbourne's secretary and he regretted that the person nearest to him should be a Government official. "Except yourself, I have no one to confide in," he wrote to the Queen.

In the midst of the festivities at Coburg, Albert must have suffered in a turmoil of doubts and misgivings. The British seemed to be doing everything possible to make him unwelcome. They begrudged him his rank and his fortune, they questioned his religion and they tried to deny him a secretary who could be his personal friend as well as his servant. The Queen reassured him. "You may entirely rely upon me that the people who will be about you will be absolutely pleasant people."

Even Uncle Leopold disturbed their peace. The Queen received an "ungracious letter" from him. "He appears to me to be nettled," she wrote, "because I no longer ask for his advice, but dear Uncle is given to believe that he must rule the roost everywhere."

The Duchess of Kent was almost forgotten in this chaos. Albert had always been fond of his "Aunt Kent," and when he wrote to her from his seclusion, he sent her a ring—one she had given him on Victoria's birthday. "It has your name upon it," he wrote, "but that name is Victoria's too." Her part was ended. The rôle of dowager settled upon her heavily and darkly, and she wrote a pathetic little letter to Albert, trying to draw herself back into the story and telling him of Victoria, "sitting all alone in her room, silent and sad." The picture of a melancholy Queen was not true.

She was wrestling with Peel and Palmerston and Melbourne and the Duke, and, at almost every point, her firmness was beating them into submission. She rapped her uncle over the knuckles and then smoothed away the trouble by suggesting that the bust of Princess Charlotte should be brought to Windsor from Claremont so that he "would see it oftener" whenever he came to stay with her. In her tide of resentment she found only one piece of news to delight her. Lord Palmerston was to marry Lady Cowper. "I feel sure it will make you smile," she wrote to Albert, who was still in Coburg.

On December 9th, the Queen wrote to her Uncle Leopold that she was "quite miserable" because Albert had not written to her "for ten days." The Prince had much to ponder over. What was this great tangle of affairs into which he was being drawn? Would the schooling of Stockmar and his uncle be enough to strengthen him? He wrote to the Duchess of Kent of his "dread of being unequal" to the position and of his "multitude of emotions." Queen Victoria had written to him that he would have no right to quarter the English arms, but that, as Sovereign, she had "the power to allow it by Royal command." How much power would come to him, in exchange for the heart he buried in the quiet of the German valley?

"I am the sovereign," she wrote to him. Then she added that the business of being Queen could "stop and wait for nothing." Prince Albert had written of the pleasant prospect of a quiet honeymoon at Windsor. "Dear Albert," she answered, "you have not at all understood the matter . . . it is quite impossible for me to be absent from London." She added, a little imperiously, "This is also my own wish, in every way."

Some time before, she had consoled him by telling him that Melbourne had made "a very fine speech" about him and his ancestors, and she congratulated him because the Queen of Spain was sending him the Golden Fleece. But what were these honours to mean, if every action was to be ruled by one who wrote: "That the business of being Sovereign could" stop and wait for nothing.

Coburg did its best to soothe Albert's fears. The winter was cold, but the stoves were warm and the great chandeliers were alight and

there were balls, trumpets and wine. The old Duke, intoxicated with the success of his son, rose at the end of the banqueting table and cried "God Save the Queen." The Coburg artillery fired a salute outside. The wind came in through the windows and the muslin curtains caught the flames of the candles and blazed in sheets of fire, to the top of the room. Even this excitement could not stop the cheering and the singing. But sadness lay under the outward show. Albert was parting from every place which was known to him and every face which shone with affection for him. He was still a boy, not yet twenty-one. Justin McCarthy wrote in *A History of Our Times* that, young as he was when he married the Queen, Prince Albert devoted himself at once to what he conscientiously believed to be the duties of his station: that "he gave up every habit, however familiar and dear, every predilection, no matter how sweet, every indulgence and sentiment or amusement that in any way threatened to interfere with the steadfast performance of the part he had assigned to himself." In this sentence lies the reason why Albert did not write to the Queen for so many days. In the quiet interval, he was attending the funeral of his own youth.

When Albert wrote to the Queen again, his letter was affectionate. "How often are my thoughts with you! The hours I was privileged to pass with you in your dear little room are the radiant points of my life and I cannot even yet clearly picture to myself that I am to be indeed so happy as to be always near you, always your protector." But he did not tell her that he loved her.

As Prince Albert walked from place to place, his greyhound Eos rubbing his nose against his hand, he said nothing but "Good-bye." Coburg and Gotha waved wet handkerchiefs to him. Little boys climbed the trees and called out to him and old women cried at the doors and windows. On the last day his grandmother followed him to the door, clutching his hand and sobbing "My angel Albert." The carriage sped over the cold ground, away from Gotha. Albert looked back to the castle for the last time. The old Duchess waved from a window. He saw her handkerchief disappear. She had fallen back, crying, "Albert, Albert!" Her attendants had caught her in their arms and carried her away, the wet handkerchief still hanging from her hand.

King Leopold wished for one last scrutiny of the bridegroom, so Prince Albert paused in Brussels on the way to his wedding in England. The King found the Prince "much irritated" by what had happened in the House of Commons and by the political haggling over his annuity. "He does not care about the money," King Leopold wrote to Queen Victoria, "but he is much shocked and exasperated by the disrespect of the thing." The King noted also that Albert was "pretty full of grievances" and he was disturbed by this show of independence and will, wondering what effect it would have upon the Queen. He wrote to her, "Albert is quick, not obstinate, in conversation, and open to conviction if good arguments are brought forward. When he thinks himself right he only wishes to have it *proved* that he *misunderstands* the case, to give it up without ill-humour. He is not inclined to be sulky, but I think that he may be rendered a little melancholy if he thinks himself unfairly or unjustly treated."

The King wrote one more letter, on the day of the wedding. He recalled Princess Charlotte and the rule of their brief married life, "never to permit *one single day* to pass over *ein Missverständnis*, however trifling it might be." He urged Victoria and Albert to begin with the same good rule. "Albert is gentle and open to reason," he wrote.

The wedding was on the morning of February 10th. In the haste of her preparations the Queen paused to write Albert a little note. It was folded in *billet* form and taken to him by hand. It ended: "Send one word when you, my most dear beloved bridegroom, will be ready." It was signed "thy ever-faithful Victoria R."

Prince Albert had written to his grandmother some weeks before: "God will not take it amiss if, in that serious act, even at the altar, I think of you, for I will pray to Him for you, and for your soul's health and He will not refuse us His blessing." He wrote again on his marriage morning: "In less than three hours, I shall stand before the altar with my dear bride! In these solemn moments I must once more ask your blessing, which I am well assured I shall receive, and

which will be my safeguard and my future joy! I must end." Then, with a little wave of anxiety, he added: "God help me!"

Although the day was grey with rain, the people surged around the palace and climbed the trees and covered the fences, waiting, from dawn onwards, to see the cavalcade drive past. Whatever political feelings and public tempers were involved, they were not to be denied the joy of seeing a great occasion.

Thousands of people stood at the door of Buckingham Palace. The crimson carpet was spread upon the steps. The door opened, and the Coburg Princes came out, in their dark green uniforms. Albert was dressed as a British Field-Marshal and across his breast was the ribbon of the Garter which Victoria had given him. The Order, in diamonds and precious stones, shone on his coat, and he wore the garter of diamonds below his knee. When he stepped out into the great wet space in front of the palace, trumpets split the air, colours were lowered and arms were presented to him, as to a sovereign. His father and brother accompanied him to St. James's Palace, where they went into the Chapel and waited.

The doors of Buckingham Palace opened again and the little Queen came out. Her dress was white and vast. Her eyes were lowered and her head moved slightly when the people cheered. They pressed in about the carriages, a London crowd, shivering in a damp London day: pressing in still closer, to watch the parade of meticulous soldiers and horses and the bride, moving on towards the dark red palace, where the wedding was to be.

Within the Chapel, the great, the noble and the beautiful of England waited for her. The dresses of the peeresses were blue and white, light green and amber, crimson and purple, and flecked with flowers. Each fine hand held a wedding favour, some of which, *The Times* said, "were admirable specimens of refined taste." It was a day of bows, rosebuds, white satin ribbon, silver lace and orange blossoms. The cushions in the high dark Chapel were crimson and they were heavy with gold borders and fringes. The altar was rich with salvers, vases and flagons.

The Princes, the Princesses and the peers and peeresses stood, stiff and expectant, waiting for the Queen. Only once was there a shiver of excitement among them. It was when the Queen Dowager came in wearing a magnificent robe of rich silk and

purple velvet, trimmed with ermine. The Archbishops stood up as she entered and they remained standing, even after she had knelt and prayed. She sent Lord Howe to ask them to sit down again and *The Times* reporter wrote: "This act of considerate courtesy created a general sensation throughout the Chapel."

When Albert came in, the gentlemen of England clapped him, and the ladies waved their handkerchiefs and they smiled with pleasure when they saw that the collar of the Garter over his shoulders was enlivened by two white rosettes. He looked "pale and pensive." Prince Ernest, in whom the same writer saw "more of determination but less of good-natured complacence" than in Albert, bowed his pleasure to the ladies.

The trumpets and the drums sounded again as the Queen came into the Chapel. One glory enveloped another. The great train of the Queen's dress was carried by twelve ladies. *The Times* reporter took out his pencil again. "Ladies more beautiful never graced palace, hall, or country green."

At the end of the service the young Queen stepped away from the bridegroom to kiss the Queen Dowager. Then they drove back to Buckingham Palace amid the clapping of hands and the waving of handkerchiefs. Albert was stiff and composed. His bride enclosed her hand in his and she turned it so that she displayed her wedding ring. There was only one cheer which was louder than for them, and that was for the old Duke of Wellington.

Later in the afternoon, the carriage left Buckingham Palace for Windsor. Greville, who could not like many things wholeheartedly, said that they drove off "in a very poor and shabby style. Instead of the new chariot in which most married people are accustomed to dash along, they were in one of the old travelling coaches, the postilions in undress liveries. . . ." The Queen must have looked very pretty in her white satin pelisse trimmed with swansdown, with a white satin bonnet and feathers. Albert was in "a plain dark travelling dress."

Queen Victoria and her husband were to belong to Windsor in the same way as a squire and his lady belong to their village. Windsor was to be their own town, clustering about the walls of their castle, in mediæval fashion, living intimately and knowing

them as the rest of England would never do. The reporter for the Windsor newspaper wrote that "no merry peal of bells" had welcomed in the day, and that the rain fell in torrents, making the town look very dull and miserable. By the time that the carriages were upon the road, Windsor had awakened: "The sun shot forth its beams and the bells, as if awakened from slumber, burst out in joyous chimes."

As early as half past two, the Royal Standard had been raised on the Round Tower of the Castle. But the townspeople had to wait until it was dark before the Queen and her husband appeared. Then the walls of the houses "glowed with crowns, stars, and all the brilliant devices which gas and oil could supply."

The travelling coach passed through Eton and then up the Windsor hill. William the Norman had walked this way; the rude Saxon Kings had come here too, hot from the chase in the forest. The people of Windsor cheered and waved again, and the carriage drove in under the arch where the mutilated body of Charles the First had been carried almost two hundred years before. The great doors were closed. Within the Castle, Queen Victoria wrote in her diary: "I and Albert, alone."

The Queen and Prince Albert were up and walking about very early next morning. "Strange that a bridal night should be so short," wrote Greville. The Queen could not contain her ecstasy. She had to steal just one minute from Albert to write to her uncle of herself as "the happiest, happiest being that ever existed. . . . He is an angel, and his kindness and affection for me is really touching. To look in those dear eyes, and that dear sunny face, is enough to make me adore him. I was a good deal tired last night, but am quite well again to-day, and happy."

Her happiness bubbled over. She sat down again before luncheon and wrote to Stockmar: "There cannot exist a dearer, purer, nobler being in the world than the Prince."

Prince Albert wrote no letters. While the Queen was unbridled and excited in her love, he remained quiet, giving the impression "of not being happy." Greville recorded the Duchess of Bedford's notion that the Queen was "excessively in love" with Albert, "but he not a bit with her."

With all her ecstasy, the Queen did not forget her early warning that there could not be a long honeymoon at Windsor. On the third night, she collected a party together for dancing. Again Greville made a comment—he thought the honeymoon “more strange than delicate . . . her best friends are shocked and hurt at her not conforming more than she is doing to English customs and at not continuing for a short space in that retirement, which modesty and native delicacy generally prescribe.”

Albert was silent. The Court returned to London where Stockmar was at hand to censor his pupil and to see that Uncle Leopold’s principles were maintained. The older man was pleased. He wrote: “Those who are not carried away by party feelings like him greatly. He behaves in his difficult position extremely well.”

The first months of Prince Albert’s marriage must have been terrible for him but he kept his fears to himself. A week after the wedding, he wrote to Florschütz: “I could wish for no happier family life than has been granted me. The unpleasant incidents in Parliament before our arrival, of which you will have read, will have made you very angry on my account. But the people themselves are doing everything to show their sympathy in the Queen’s domestic happiness and their approval of her choice . . . the change in my life is very great but I am beginning to adapt myself to it.” His wife loved him and she wished him to be a good husband and lover, but she intended to remain alone as Queen of England. The intoxication of her new happiness was not to affect her statesmanship. Victoria had been Queen for two and a half years, but no country could be governed for long by such an autocrat. To criticise her youthful mistakes would be absurd in the light of the colossal achievement of the later years of her reign, but she undoubtedly began by making many enemies. The Duke of Wellington, the most honoured man in England, had been called “a rebel” and she had rapped Peel across the knuckles. Uncle Leopold had complained that she “put him aside as one does a piece of furniture which is no longer wanted.” She had dreaded the thought of marrying, because she had become accustomed to having her own way. When she recorded this fault in her Journal, she said: “I thought it was ten to one that I should not agree with anybody.” Even Melbourne, whose service to her is one of the

most beautiful chapters of the early story, was not treated with whole-hearted confidence.

Before the marriage Queen Victoria had said: "I have always had my own way . . . suppose he should endeavour to thwart me, and oppose me in what I like, what a dreadful thing it would be." Greville added: "The best thing for her will be that he should have some firmness and resolution, and should show it, for her guidance and restraint." This Albert did, as the months passed, with patience and self-effacement.

The Prince was soothed during the first weeks of his life in London by the presence of his brother. But the day of Ernest's departure came. The Queen ran upstairs, on the morning of their parting, to find Albert "pale as a sheet and his eyes full of tears." She tried to show her sympathy—but all that he said was: "Such things are hard to bear."

"Oh, how did I feel for my dearest, precious husband at this moment!" wrote the Queen. ". . . All has he left, and all for me. God grant that I may be the happy person, the *most* happy person, to make this dearest, blessed being happy and contented! What is in my power to make him happy, I will do."

The Queen did not keep her ecstatic promises. In May, when the sorrow over Ernest's departure had passed, she returned to her fear of sharing affairs of government with her husband. Prince Albert complained of her want of confidence and she sought Lord Melbourne's advice, pleading that the neglect was "entirely from indolence." Melbourne urged her to admit the Prince to her problems and he told the Prince's secretary<sup>1</sup> that he believed the Queen was afraid lest her domestic harmony might be disturbed if Albert differed from her opinions. The Prince admitted his depression to his friend in Germany. He wrote to Prince Löwenstein, "In my whole life I am very happy and contented; but the difficulty in filling my place with proper dignity is that I am only the husband and not the master in the house." He was not allowed to sit with the Queen when she received her Ministers. It was a fresh experience for her to "dare to be unguarded in conversing with

<sup>1</sup> George Anson was appointed to the position in spite of Prince Albert's early fears. He became the Prince's valued servant and friend.

anybody" and the habit came to her very slowly. But she learned to listen to him as the months passed, and towards the end of the year he was able to write to Ernest that King Leopold and other members of the family agreed that everything was going on much better since he had been in England and that Victoria had changed, much to her advantage.

Queen Victoria was sovereign of a great empire, but there were dissensions at home and in the new countries to make her anxious.

There had been bad harvests since 1836. Trade was declining, and, only a year before, discontented workmen had risen in several parts of the country. These revolts were so ugly that the Duke of Wellington said that even in war he had never seen a town subjected to such violence as Birmingham had been. There was dissension in the West Indian colonies, a wave of revolt through Canada, and in Ireland there was "a deliberate system of cold-blooded and cowardly assassination." During 1838, there were two hundred and seventy-seven committals for murder in eleven Irish counties, but only three convictions.

The Queen was still guided by strong prejudices rather than calm opinions. Melbourne had observed this in the early days when he had urged her to treat all political parties alike. In view of this unsettled state of the young Queen's mind, the quality of the Prince's judgment was of great importance. If he could work with quiet knowledge and restraint, then he might give his wife the peaceful guidance which she needed. Ten years afterwards, in a letter to the Duke of Wellington, he spoke of his early ambition. He said that it was his wish to sink his own individual existence in that of his wife—to aim at no power by himself . . . to make his position entirely a part of hers. Even if he did not do his work in a spectacular way; even if he did not mind being an unnoticed figure beside the Queen, his influence would be no less great and certain when it was based upon such an unselfish ambition.

Prince Albert's letters to his brother<sup>1</sup> give his own impression of the events of June and July, the first months after their separation. He had been to the races at Epsom with the Queen. This was a democratic gesture, for no sovereign had ever mingled with the Derby crowds before. Albert had made his first nervous public appearance, as President of the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade. Baron Stockmar, Anson and Prince Albert had prepared

<sup>1</sup> Preserved in the archives in Coburg.

the speech and then Albert had walked up and down the room, learning it by heart. "I got through it very well and had much applause," he wrote to Ernest. "There were people of all parties, religions, political opinions and ranks. That is why I accepted the presidentship. It is also why the committee was so anxious I should do so, so that my presence should lock out party spirit."

On June 12th Prince Albert wrote: "You will not yet know that you very nearly lost your brother and sister. I will hurry to tell you what happened.

"The day before yesterday, Wednesday, we drove as usual at six o'clock in our small carriage, with four horses and two postilions. I sat to the right, Victoria to the left. We had hardly got a hundred and fifty paces from Buckingham Palace, between the wall of Buckingham Palace and Green Park, when I saw a small, disagreeable looking man, leaning against the railing of Green Park, only six paces from us, holding something towards us. Before I could see what it was, a shot cracked and so dreadfully loud that we were both quite stunned. Victoria, who had been looking to the left, towards the rider, did not know the cause of the noise. My first thought was that in her present state the fright might harm her. I put both arms around her and asked her how she felt, but she only laughed. Then I turned around to look at the man (the horses were frightened and the carriage stopped). The man stood there in a theatrical position, a pistol in each hand. It seemed ridiculous. Suddenly he stopped, put a pistol on his arm, aimed at us, and fired; the bullet must have gone over our heads, judging by the hole where it hit the garden wall. Now the many onlookers came forward. They had been almost petrified before, and cried: 'Kill him, kill him.' I called out to the postilion to drive on. We went to see our aunt and then we drove through the parks, where we were most enthusiastically greeted by the people."

Prince Albert had behaved valiantly, in the eyes of the public. The "foreign" Prince, who was still a mysterious personage to the mass of people in the street, went to the opera with the Queen soon after the shooting and "the whole house rose and cheered, waved hats and handkerchiefs. . . ." The Queen, writing thus in her Journal, added: ". . . Albert was called for separately and much cheered."

In July, the Duke and Duchess of Nemours crossed from Paris to stay with the Queen at Buckingham Palace. Albert was especially pleased because the beautiful Duchess had "a very soothing influence on Victoria." Continuing his letter to Ernest, he said: ". . . Yesterday a bill of especial importance for me, was brought into the House, and accepted without any debate, after many intrigues had been tried against it. This was the Regency Bill. In case of Victoria's death and her successor being under eighteen years of age, I am to be Regent—*alone*—Regent, without a Council. You will understand the importance of this matter and that it gives my position here in the country a fresh significance. [The Duke of] Sussex was against it and declared it an affront against the legal family. He intended to bring a protest into the House, but when his friends abandoned him, seeing the superior power of the Ministers, Whigs and the whole Tory party, he let the matter pass without intervention. Without Stockmar, the Minister would probably have retired on account of the risk and trouble. But he (this only between us) won those people over and they were willing to undertake it. Victoria is most satisfied with this arrangement."

On August 1st, Prince Albert referred again to the Regency Bill. ". . . all is well with us. The Regency Bill passed both houses, without the slightest opposition. The great intrigue of the Duke of Sussex had no success. He only made a very stupid address in the House of Lords and nobody thought it necessary to reply to it. He made himself ridiculous."

This was the first great step in the development of Albert's self-reliance. But he was not yet completely independent and he borrowed much of his strength from Stockmar. On July 11th, before he went back to rest in Coburg, the Baron wrote of the Regency Bill: "With this act, my business here is for the present, and perhaps for ever, at an end. . . . I can at least say that I have not committed a single blunder, and this is always a satisfaction to a man in my years."

Melbourne, too, was pleased, and when he spoke to the Queen he said that the Bill was passed entirely because of Albert's character. "Three months ago," he said, "they would not have done it for him!"

Prince Albert had won all the Queen's love and the first part of

her respect for his ability. Domestic contentment also softened her feeling for the world outside. Greville described how the Duke of Wellington dined at Buckingham Palace and was treated with the greatest civility by the Queen. Indeed, she endeavoured to repair her former coldness by every sort of attention and graciousness, to which he was by no means insensible. It was without doubt the Prince's plan that they should be reconciled. When the Duke walked with Greville afterwards, he talked of Albert's civility to him. He "never saw better manners, or anybody more generally attentive." The Duchess of Kent was there too, and she talked to the Duke "in a strain of satisfaction." Greville sweetened his pen and wrote: ". . . there is something like sunshine in the Palace just now."

Prince Albert became more contented. The Regency Bill assured him his position in the country. Also, with the closing of Parliament, he was escaping from town to their beloved Windsor. He wrote to his brother of his success: "Everybody is exceedingly friendly towards me."

Baroness Lehzen was the only person in the Court who openly opposed Prince Albert. From the days in the nursery, she had governed the Queen, and it was not easy for her to give up her privileges and her power. In later years, the Queen realised that the Prince's task had not been easy. When Theodore Martin wrote his *Life of the Prince Consort*, the Queen passed his statement that Lehzen was blind to the obvious truths, and that her former influence must, in the natural course of things, give way before that of a husband. But even with Lehzen, Albert enjoyed a victory. In the same letter to Coburg, he said: "In spite of Lehzen and the Master of the Horse, I shall drive with Victoria in a carriage to the House [for the opening of Parliament] and sit beside her on a throne especially built for me." There had been other influences to disturb his domestic life in London. "I can boast of the masterpiece of having driven the Lord Chamberlain and Saunders out of their rooms, back to St. James's Palace," he wrote.

The Prince had worked quietly and he had already won two or three small victories. It is to be remembered that he was still only twenty-one years of age. He had also discovered that the Queen loved a joke. Dainty puns and verses were exchanged over the

dinner-table. Victoria recalled her boisterous Uncle Cumberland who had gone to sleep during a meal. He had started out of his dream to announce: "Ah, you will call me the Duke of Slumberland now." Such jokes gave a touch of gaiety to the end of a tiresome day. Bound to the Queen by a sense of humour, Albert found a new defence against the tempers and intrigues about him. Victoria's laugh was always loud and jolly; she particularly disliked what she termed a *Sunday face*.

Later in the year Albert wrote to his brother of the "chains" of matrimony. "The heavier and tighter they are, the better for you. A married couple must be chained to one another, be inseparable, and they must live only for one another.

"I wish you could be here and see in us, a couple joined in love and unanimity. Now Victoria is also ready to give up something for my sake, I everything for her sake. Become as happy as we are, more I cannot wish for you. Don't think I lead a submissive life; on the contrary, here, where the position of the man is as it is, I have formed a prize life for myself."

The Prince's life became definitely divided in its interests. In London, he fulfilled his uncle's wishes, but in the Castle at Windsor he tried to live modestly and near to the townspeople, as he had done in Coburg. "I feel as if in Paradise in this fine fresh air," he wrote, when he had escaped from London. But the escape was not complete. Even here, the red dispatch boxes arrived from Whitehall and, sometimes, Palmerston himself came to stay.

The Castle was vast, but the rooms in which Queen Victoria and Albert lived were all at one end, overlooking the park. There were great opportunities for his love of gardening. He planted trees and changed the paths. "I shall occupy myself much with it," he wrote to his father. Out of doors, he could be himself again. But the Queen selfishly opposed his being away for luncheon when he went hunting. He complained once or twice, but he soon saw that he could increase his influence over her in making such sacrifices.

When Uncle Leopold left the Court at Brussels to come and stay with his pupils, the evening conversation became very serious. The King would sit back in his chair, "with half-closed eyes and his peculiar smile," and announce, a little pompously, to Albert: "It is astonishing with how little wisdom the world is governed."

Stockmar also continued to send his little homilies, and when the Prince was not changing the gardens and planning the park, he was able to read the Baron's letters. "Continue, dear Prince, to insist upon honour, integrity, and order in your household. . . . At your present time of life, you must have nothing to say to churlish, commonplace, repellent or unconscientious people."

There was another pleasure which increased for Albert at Windsor. Lady Lyttelton wrote that one evening in October, when she was sitting by candlelight, she heard "dear Prince Albert, playing on the organ; and with such master-skill. . . . I never listened with much more pleasure to any music." At dinner, she ventured to ask him what she had heard. "Oh, my organ! a new possession of mine. I am so fond of the organ! It is the first of instruments; the only instrument for expressing one's feelings." "How strange he is!" she wrote. "He must have been playing just while the Queen was finishing her toilette and then he went to cut jokes, and eat dinner, and nobody but the organ knows what is in him, except, indeed, by the look of his eyes sometimes."

Slowly, Albert taught the Queen the quieter entertainments of domestic life. Before her marriage, she had loved London, dancing, and late hours, but Albert's tastes were different. He was seen nodding on the sofa, as early as half-past ten. "The late hours are what I find it most difficult to bear," he complained. Within a year, the Queen wrote in her Journal: "Since the blessed hour of my marriage, and still more since the summer, I dislike and am unhappy to leave the country." She came to share Albert's dislike of the "thick, heavy atmosphere" of London, and when she told him how her taste had changed, he was delighted.

Prince Albert's troubles were not confined to Britain. Up to the time of their separation, Ernest had been good and quiet, obeying the stable dictates of his brother. But the dividing of their ways had left Ernest to invent his own pleasures: pleasures which brought alarm and disgust to his family.

Ernest once wrote of Albert to the Queen: "I love and esteem him more than anyone on earth. . . . Albert is my second self and my heart is one with his." To him, Albert was "pure before the world and before his own conscience." Ernest added: "Not as

though he did not know what sin was, the earthly temptations, the weakness of man. No; but because he knew and still knows how to struggle against them, supported by the incomparable superiority and firmness of his character." Ernest begged that the Queen should "feel how great a treasure" she possessed in Albert. "I feel very lonely," he ended his letter.

In his loneliness, Ernest was not strong enough to withstand his temptations. A few months after he had returned to Germany, Albert wrote to him: "A great storm is rising up against you in Coburg. All kinds of rumours and bad news have come. . . . Papa is terribly upset and annoyed. . . . I am sorry to have to say that your reputation, which was so brilliant, has suffered. . . . Your health has been endangered to the utmost."

Later in the year, when Ernest had been allowed to return to his father's house, Albert wrote: ". . . now you must look upon all incidents of the past time as *far beneath yourself and your dignity*. . . . If you wish me to be of any help to you, I must ask you to be open and fully truthful with me, for if I am to defend you and then am laughed at and told 'You know nothing about him,' then my help will be of no use. . . . Don't throw my good advice aside."

The Queen was not so gentle with her brother-in-law. Some of his German aunts came to stay in England and they whispered stories to her. They "hate you awfully and think you are the cause of all misery," wrote Albert. He urged his brother to marry. ". . . Wedded life is the only thing that can make up for the lost relationships of our youth. . . . You need a wife who is loving and good, not self-willed when you discuss things with her, but one who will influence you by her intelligence."

Prince Albert's father added to his anxieties. The Duke wrote to Albert suggesting that he should ask Queen Victoria to make Ernest an allowance. Albert was angry. "By next mail, I shall inform him that it certainly will be disagreeable for you," he wrote to his brother. In November, Albert's concern over his father's greed reached the point of fury. "Always money and always money," he wrote to Ernest. ". . . I return Papa's letter to you. The principles he reveals in it can really sting one to one's heart. . . . God help you and your affairs. . . ."

At Easter, the Queen and Prince Albert had taken the Sacrament

together for the first time, in St. George's Chapel. The Queen has told, in a memorandum written after the Prince's death, that he "had a very strong feeling about the solemnity of this act, and did not like to appear in company either the evening before or on the day on which he took it." On these occasions, the Queen and the Prince almost always dined alone.

The Court was preparing to go back "to the smoky town." The Royal letters became filled with the affairs of France, the Queen's sympathy for the old King, and her anger with the Thiers Government, because of its preparations for war. As the year moved on towards October and November, the Prince grew closer and closer to the Queen as her adviser. Even Greville was slowly converted to a certain appreciation of the changes. He had written of the Queen as "a spoiled child, only intent upon the gratification of her social predilections," and being "blinded by her partialities." But in May of 1841, in writing of the ministerial difficulties of the moment, he said that the Queen was "behaving very well."

Before they left Windsor, somebody came to Albert and proposed that a sentence should be added to the Liturgy, to pray for the Queen and her baby which was soon to be born. "No, no; you have one already in the Litany—'All women labouring with child.' You pray already five times for the Queen."

The courtier at his elbow answered: "Can we pray, Sir, too much for Her Majesty?"

The Prince answered: "Not too heartily, but too often."

In November, they were back in Buckingham Palace. The letters to Coburg were brief. On the 21st, the Duchess of Kent wrote to Ernest: "In case your dear Albert might not find time to write . . . our good angel Albert remains at the side of his beloved."

At three o'clock in the afternoon the Duchess wrote: "A daughter was born at two o'clock. Mother and child are as well as they can be, God be praised."

Prince Albert added a postscript, telling Ernest that Victoria was "well and happy," and adding: "Albert, father of a daughter! You will laugh at me."

## *Chapter Ten*

1841-1843

The Victorian age was born and new influences were at work in the land. New social orders were arising, and old tyrannies were dying. Respectability was idealised. The Victorian Court, with a husband and a wife living in domestic contentment, going to bed at half-past ten every night, was the symbol of the change.

The mass of people, wedged in between the nobility and the peasants, formed the great middle-class, whose respectable ambitions had seldom been encouraged by their Kings. Now they turned towards Buckingham Palace and relished the example of a husband and wife, eschewing all aristocratic excesses, doting upon their first baby and being serious about their public duties.

The enormous number of middle-class people had never had a voice before. Now they could look up to a Queen for their example: one who lived in much the same way as themselves. The Prince was careful to do nothing wrong in the eyes of the public. He paid no visits in general society but went to museums and presided over scientific symposiums. Gradually, as General Grey wrote in the story of the Prince's early years, the country came to "estimate and admire the beauty of domestic life beyond reproach, or the possibility of reproach, of which the Queen and he set so noble an example."

It was not easy for the aristocracy to embrace this plan of living. They resented the intrusion of the new order—the incursion of early hours and strait-laced rules. When the Sabbatarians protested against Albert's games of chess on Sunday, he immediately eschewed all such indulgences and went to bed earlier than ever. Nor did the nobility admire Albert as a man. His stiffness and self-conscious care of behaviour did not fit in with their conception of good breeding. The Duke of Wellington told Greville that it was the "Prince who insisted on spotless character (the Queen not caring a straw about it)" and that Albert was "extremely straight-laced and a great stickler for morality, whereas she was rather the other way."

The princes and the peers were still more annoyed because Albert kept all the commandments he preached. He had no vices. The

gaming tables had been swept out of the drawing-rooms at Windsor and princes no longer sat over their port after dinner, telling bawdy stories. Instead, there were a pianoforte and a drawing board, and the Queen would not allow the gentlemen to stay in the dining-room more than five minutes after the ladies had left.

Prince Albert had little to lose or gain through the commendation of the English peers. Instead of moving from drawing-room to drawing-room, he turned to the mass of people for his interests and he tried to realise his sense of duty towards the poor. A few years later he wrote to his brother: "I am working on social improvements and I take the chair at public meetings." He expressed views which must have shocked the great landowners: views which were boldly socialistic. He said that England's principal evil was "the unequal division of property and the dangers of poverty and envy arising therefrom." He did not think it was right to diminish riches "as the Communists" wished, but, in the letter in which he set down his views, he added: "I think that England will solve this problem first."

One of Prince Albert's first social reforms was the building of flats for the poor in Kennington, which is part of the estates of the Duchy of Cornwall. He designed buildings of flats, with *bathrooms*. Little wonder that the self-indulgent landlords were disturbed.

Albert continued his letters to his brother. "All is well with us," he wrote on November 24th. "V. has not suffered the least since her confinement and feels as well as if nothing had happened. The little daughter is considered beautiful by all the ladies and she really is pretty. She is very lively. . . . I should have preferred a boy, yet as it is, I thank heaven." Eight days afterwards, he wrote: "The little one, who has taken possession of her own rooms on the upper floor, looks blooming and grows visibly. I have a great deal to do and I hardly ever get out into the open air."

The Court was still at Buckingham Palace, waiting to go to Windsor for the Christmas holidays. The Queen wrote in her Journal of Albert's kindness to her. Nobody else ever "lifted her from her bed to her sofa." He would come from any part of the palace to be with her, to sit with her in the darkened room, reading to her and writing for her: all with care which "was like that

of a mother." This year, there were to be three Christmas trees at Windsor and everyone was to be merry. "Next year," Albert wrote to his brother, "the little daughter will jump about the tree, as we used to do not so very long ago."

Prince Albert's public duties had increased during the weeks before the Queen's confinement. He wrote to Ernest, about this time, "I have my hands very full, as I also look after V's political affairs." His increased knowledge and influence were tested to the full in August of 1841, when Peel came into power. The battle over the Corn Laws had forced Lord Melbourne and the Whigs into retirement and the Queen had to accept the resignation of her favourite Minister. All her early prejudices became rigid once more at the prospect of receiving Peel. Melbourne had urged her to hold out the olive branch to the Tories, and he had even enlarged upon Peel's merits. She admitted that her first interview had "gone off well," but she found her new Prime Minister difficult to talk to. His manner distressed her, but no more than her coldness disturbed him. Peel made every possible gesture to make the way easy for his Sovereign. He told George Anson that he would make any personal sacrifice for the Queen "except that of his honour." He would "waive every pretension to office" rather than bring any "personal humiliation to the Queen." But she did not yield gracefully to the change. Her advisers were on the side of Peel. Stockmar said that the Tory leader had shown a "fairness and delicacy, an uprightness, conscientiousness and circumspection, such as are not likely to be met with again in similar circumstances." Prince Albert also admired the "stately and upright commoner," and since the admiration was mutual, they soon became friends. The Queen's obstinacy was slowly broken down by the Prince's tact and he showed her, in his own patient way, that the Tories were not the knaves she supposed them to be. He was so busy during these days that he could not write to his brother. When the new Ministers had received their seals, "after much anxiety," he began his letters once more. "Everything turned out as Victoria and the country wished," he wrote, "and for what is good and right."

In less than two years, Prince Albert had broken down many of the public prejudices against him. He had made a reputation for

intelligence, tact and unselfishness, but he was still anxious to gauge public opinion. He took Anson into his confidence and they sat down to review the many steps Albert had made. Anson's delight was in discovering that Albert had "completely foiled" all those people who intended from the beginning to keep him from being useful to the Queen. Anson was pleased, also, with what he described as "the Queen's good sense." She had seen that the Prince had no other object but her good. "Cabinet Ministers treat him with deference and respect," wrote Anson in a memorandum. "Art and science look up to him as their especial patron. . . . The good and the wise look up to him with pride and gratitude. . . ."

The Queen's own feelings were expressed quite bluntly when she told her uncle that if Albert went to the North Pole, she would go with him. King Leopold commented upon his pupil's good judgment; his mild and safe opinions. Every calm and thoughtful man paid tributes to Albert. When he bade good-bye to the Queen at Windsor, Lord Melbourne said: "You will find a great support in the Prince: he is so able. You said when you were going to be married that he was perfection, which I thought a little exaggerated then, but really I think now that it is in some degree realised."

The Queen wrote to her uncle: "My dearest Angel is indeed a great comfort to me . . . abstaining as he ought from biasing me either way." Peel, too, was enthusiastic. One day when he was going to introduce Lord Kingsdown to the Prince, he told him that he was to meet "one of the most extraordinary young men" he had ever met. It was Peel who had fought against the Prince's annuity and he was "not a little touched," now that he was in power, to find that not "a shade of personal soreness could be traced" in the Prince's demeanour towards him.

Albert had talked with bishops and peers and he had won their esteem. He had converted Whigs and Tories to equal admiration. But Stockmar was not satisfied, nor did he spare the Prince. When he was at home in Coburg again, he analysed the Prince's character and sent him a letter. "Let us but cleave devoutly but unceasingly to high thoughts and noble purposes." There was no praise; only a censorious attitude towards everything Albert thought and did. He was required "not to spare his own flesh, but to cut into his own faults as well as other men's." He was urged to "moral excellence."

Stockmar thought that, through a touch of weakness or vanity, Albert was inclined to "rest satisfied with mere talk, where action is alone appropriate, and can alone be of any value."

Albert could not understand the incessant lectures. He pleaded that he was already trying to be of as much use to the Queen as he could. Yet he was lonely. The Queen loved him, but the limitations of her knowledge prevented her from giving him intellectual companionship. Melbourne had said to Anson: "The Prince is bored with the sameness of his chess every evening. He would like to bring literary and scientific people about the Court, vary the society, and infuse a more useful tendency into it." But he added that the Queen had "no fancy to encourage such people." She was afraid of conversation with those who were intellectually superior to herself. She was jealous lest Prince Albert should have any interests beyond her own understanding. Her love was possessive and faintly selfish. Anson made a record of his conversations with the Queen. She told him once that she was proud "of the Prince's utter indifference to the attractions of all ladies." Anson added: "I told Her Majesty that these were early days to boast, which made her rather indignant. I think she is a little jealous of his talking much even to men."

When the Princess Royal was born, the Queen had written to her uncle of "the great inconvenience of a *large* family . . . particularly to the country. . . . Men never think, at least seldom think, what a hard task it is for us women to go through this *very often*." She was contented with her one baby and pleased to see Albert dancing her in his arms.

In March of 1841 Albert wrote to his brother from Claremont: "It will interest you to hear that we are expecting an increase of our family. Victoria is not very happy about it." The letter which carried this news to Coburg was despondent. Albert added that he should like to be there "because, in a small house, there is more cheerfulness to be found than there is in the big cold world, in which most people have hearts of stone."

The new baby was born in November. British people had almost forgotten what it meant to have a male heir to the throne and the celebrations drew all hearts towards the young couple, especially at Christmas, when they took their children to Windsor. Everybody,

from the Duchess of Kent to the humblest scullery maid received presents from the Christmas tree and every poor person in Windsor was given a sack of coals and "4 lbs. of beef, 2 lbs. of bread, 1 lb. of plum-pudding, a peck of potatoes and 2 pints of ale."

London was half forgotten. The Queen interested herself less and less in politics, and was "a good deal occupied with the Princess Royal," who was beginning to "assume companionable qualities." The Queen and the Prince walked on the terraces, or they planned new paths and gardens. The Prince "enjoyed a run with his beagles," he "rode to Ascot to meet the Royal staghounds," or he "enjoyed the sport of shooting." Sometimes he skated on the pond at Frogmore, and when the Queen was well enough, he pushed her over the ice in a chair with runners, after the German fashion.

The year ended in comparative happiness. On New Year's Eve, there was a flourish of trumpets and the Queen saw that her husband turned pale and had tears in his eyes. He pressed her hand warmly. She realised, when she wrote of the day in her Journal, that he must have been thinking "of his dear native country," which he had left for her.

There was only one menacing circumstance. This was the continued friendship between the Queen and Lord Melbourne. The old Minister wrote letters to the Queen and the correspondence started a dangerous theme for political scandal. Again it was Stockmar who reminded the chief actors of their duty. He had been to the house of a friend in London where a stranger had come up to him and said: "So I find the Queen is in daily correspondence with Lord Melbourne. . . . Don't you believe that Lord Melbourne has lost his influence over the Queen's mind. . . ." Stockmar had answered: "I don't believe a word of it." Peel also suspected the correspondence and he threatened Stockmar that if he learned of the Queen taking Melbourne's advice, he would not remain in office another hour, whatever the consequences of his resignation might be. Stockmar appealed to Lord Melbourne: ". . . Would you have it said that Sir Robert Peel failed in his trial, merely because the Queen alone was not fair to him, and that principally you had aided her in the game of dishonesty?" There is no record of the Prince having been brought into this unhappy

secret, but his secretary was aware of the letters and, four weeks after Stockmar's protest, Anson wrote in a memorandum, "The Melbourne correspondence still is carried on, but I think not in its pristine vigour by any means. He has taken no notice of the Baron's remonstrance to him. . . ."

At the beginning of her married life, Queen Victoria had been afraid to admit Prince Albert to the room when she was receiving her Ministers. Now she was content when Sir Robert Peel and the Prince talked over her affairs without her. Peel soon realised, as he enjoyed the Prince's confidence, that they had much to talk about beyond Corn Laws and disgruntled working men. They exchanged books and they corresponded on the *Nibelungenlied*. At last Prince Albert had a companion for his mind. One of the Prime Minister's first actions was to appoint the Prince President of the Fine Arts Commission. There was "cordial satisfaction" in every quarter of the House of Commons when the announcement was made, and Prince Albert was delighted. He commented on the opportunity of being "more intimately acquainted with some of the most distinguished men of the day." But he still suffered from shyness, which showed in his manner. He remained cold in his interviews. George Anson understood him, and sometimes men like Sir Charles Eastlake penetrated his shyness. Sir Charles described their first interview in connection with the work of the Fine Arts Commission. The Prince "stood, kneeling with one knee on the chair, while he talked, so that we were at close quarters and in a strong light, which showed his beautiful face to great advantage. . . . There was nothing in his exterior so striking as his face. . . . He soon put me at ease by his pleasing manner. . . . Two or three times I quite forgot who he was, he talked so naturally and argued so fairly. . . ."

Sir Charles Eastlake felt that the Commission should make a stand against the introduction of foreign artists. He was surprised and delighted to find that the Prince agreed with him: pleased also to see "how perfectly" the Prince spoke in English as to idioms. The accent was "scarcely ever perceptibly foreign." "His features are tranquil in talking," wrote Sir Charles. "The absence of pride and even of the ceremonious reserve which 'hedges' Royalty, is very engaging." Albert was not high-minded about the commercial needs in art. He comforted Eastlake by saying: "There are two great auxiliaries in this country which seldom fail to promote the success of any scheme—fashion and high example." He promised

therefore that the aims of the Commission should be supported by the Queen and himself.

Towards the end of January, Prince Albert Edward was christened in St. George's Chapel at Windsor. The Queen and the Prince were overwhelmed with congratulations from everybody, except the disgruntled grandfather in Coburg. The old Duke reproached Albert because the child was not to be called Ernest and because neither himself nor his son was to be a godfather. Albert wrote to his brother: "The Godfathers are the King of Prussia, the Duke of Cambridge and Uncle Ferdinand.<sup>1</sup> . . . Papa is very angry on account of the choice of the King of Prussia. . . . Of course Papa is right when he says that the King of Saxony had a right to be Godfather, but he forgets that the Anglican Church does not allow Catholics to be Godfathers."

The young Prince was christened at a time of widespread discontent. Peel had not calmed the artisans in Lancashire nor the miners in Wales. Wages were low, food was dear and there was little work. Ireland was so lawless that half the home forces were needed to suppress the rebels. The other half found it difficult to maintain the law in England, for the Chartist agitators were rampant in every part of the country. Soldiers abroad were holding the Empire against fierce revolt. There was war in China and the insurgents in the Cape and the West Indies were kept in subjection only by force. Politicians were nervous about the wayward moods of France, and the Americans were disgruntled because Britain claimed the right to search their vessels for slave traders who might be Britishers, hiding under the American flag. More soldiers were needed, at a time when the revenue showed a deficit for the year of 2,500,000*l*, swollen to nearly 5,000,000*l* by the expenses of the Afghanistan expedition.

These troubles were ignored for a day or two when the heir to the throne was christened. The Court walked down from the Castle to St. George's Chapel where, according to *The Times*, the baby behaved "with true princely decorum."

When the Prince had been put to bed, the Queen and Prince Albert went into the nursery for one brief and proud moment.

<sup>1</sup> Consort of the Queen of Portugal.

Then they walked into the banqueting hall where the Queen took a glass of punch and drank to the health of her heir.

Baroness Bunsen watched the Queen talking eagerly with the King of Prussia, "laughing heartily (no *company* laugh) at things he said to entertain her." These great Protestant monarchs had much to talk about and when the King went back to Prussia he was confident that he had made two new friends for himself and his people.

In the new year, even Baron Stockmar praised Prince Albert's achievement. Before Stockmar left England for Coburg in 1842, Lord Aberdeen told him how gratified Ministers were "to perceive that the Queen leant upon the Prince's judgment, and showed an obvious desire that he should share her duties."

The Prince's work was not all with statesmen and commissions and committees. The management of affairs within the Court had always been scandalous, and he soon turned his parsimonious methods to good use. The relationship between departments of the Court had often been fantastic. One example alone was enough to show the Prince that there was need for reforms. The Lord Chamberlain's Department cleaned the inside of the palace windows and the Woods and Forests Department cleaned the outside. As they never chose the same day, the Queen had always been denied the pleasure of clean windows. Also, one department laid the fires and another department lighted them. The Prince soon changed such anomalies. He was ruthless in his economies. As was common in many other big houses in England, candles were never used more than once in the palace. Thousands of them, with the tips slightly burned, were confiscated as perquisites every week. The Prince changed this. He discovered and forbade mysterious expenditures for wine and, in a few years, he saved enough money out of the Queen's income to pay about two hundred thousand pounds for Osborne House, in the Isle of Wight.

Prince Albert had none of the vanity which so often destroys men at the point of achievement. He was content to hear the Queen praised, provided he knew in his heart that he had gained his own ends. All through the year of 1842, his changes brought new peace to the Court and the Queen came to accept everything that Albert did as faultless. Her letters to her uncle were full of thanks to God

for the blessing of her marriage. She became less selfish and she escaped from the narrowing influences of her early education. Queen Victoria wrote in her Journal: "I know what REAL happiness is." This was true. There was nobody in the world whom she envied. The Queen had begun by loving Albert emotionally. Now she loved him with a devout regard for his goodness and for his intellectual gifts. Through such love, her own character changed. Her enmity against her mother died and the old Duchess was drawn back into her daughter's life. The Duke of Wellington, with whom Victoria had been so incensed, carried the Sword of State when the Prince Albert Edward was christened. Lady Lyttelton observed the "vein of iron" running through her "most extraordinary character." But there came also a vein of tenderness which had never been there before.

## *Chapter Twelve*

1842

In February, Prince Albert was elated by the announcement of his brother's engagement to Princess Alexandrina of Baden. The Queen mastered some of her prejudice against Ernest, and, in writing to King Leopold, she described the marriage as "*a great great delight to us; thank God! . . . .* Alexandrina is said to be really *so* perfect." She had received a letter from the Princess and she thought it "*sensibly and religiously*" written. "I have begged Ernest beforehand to pass his honeymoon with us and I beg you to urge him to do it; for he witnessed our first happiness, and we must therefore witness his." Prince Albert gave his brother some candid advice about marriage. "Do not leave your wife alone at home, while you go after your own pleasures," he wrote. "Married, and with your own wife, there is more chance of success for you here."

The old Duke had given Ernest the Castle of Kallenberg, in the country near Coburg. "I should have everything made elegantly and nice," Albert wrote. "If you always wish to have everything in the latest fashion and go to races and hunt, you will not have enough. Here, people ruin themselves with such things. What does it bring you?"

"I meant to give you a centrepiece as a wedding present, but as you wish to have a travelling carriage, I shall have it made at once and see that it is made very well. Victoria and I intend giving Alexandrina some fine jewels."

Prince Ernest and his bride arrived in England and in July they were at Claremont, where their Uncle Leopold had lived with Princess Charlotte. The Queen was charmed with her new sister and thought her "*a most amiable, sensible and gentle creature, and without being really handsome, very pretty and pleasing.*"

Mendelssohn wrote a pleasant account of his visit to Buckingham Palace in 1842, the year of Prince Ernest's marriage. He was shown into a room facing the garden, where he found Prince Albert alone. "The Queen came in, also alone, in a simple morning dress. I begged that the Prince would first play me something, so that, as I said, '*I might boast about it in Germany.*' He played a chorale by Herz, with the pedals, so charmingly and clearly and correctly as

would have done credit to any professional. Then it was my turn, and I began my chorus from St. Paul, 'How lovely are the messengers.' Before I got to the end of the first verse they both joined in the chorus. . . . The Queen asked if I had written any new songs, and said she was very fond of singing my published ones. 'You should sing one to him,' said Prince Albert; and, after a little begging, she said she would. . . . We proceeded to the Queen's sitting-room, where there was a piano.

"The Duchess of Kent joined them and then the Queen sang the *Pilger's Spruch* and *Lass Mich Nur* 'quite faultlessly and with charming feeling and expression.' I thought to myself, one must not pay too many compliments on such an occasion, so that I merely thanked her a great many times, upon which she said: 'Oh! if I only had not been so frightened. Generally I have such long breath.' Then I praised her heartily and with the best conscience in the world. . . ."

Prince Albert also sang and then, when they asked Mendelssohn to improvise for them, he found himself "in the best mood for it." "They followed me with such intelligence and attention that I felt more at ease than I ever did when improvising to an audience."

Artists also came to the Palace. The Prince was fond of fresco painting and he wished to make it more popular by designing a pavilion for the grounds. He had already enlivened the gardens with birds and new trees. From the ornate Georgian drawing-rooms, the Prince could look out upon a scene which was incongruous in its London setting. The lake was wide, the trees were big and healthy; hundreds of birds sang the tunes of the countryside rather than the smoky chirps of London. Only when a London mist settled into the garden did one suspect that this was not a country house, set in its far-spreading park. In the winter, the Prince skated on the lake. (Once he fell into the water and if it had not been for the presence of mind of the Queen, he might never have been rescued.) He loved the garden and when he thought of a pavilion, with frescoes by all the great living artists, he drew his plans and imagined his colours with great delight. Landseer and his contemporaries were to paint the panels, of subjects "both moral and beautiful."

Every day, the Prince and the Queen hurried into the garden to watch the artists at work. Among them was Uwins who wrote

of his admiration for his Royal patrons. Their "intellectual acquirements" greatly increased his respect for them. "History, literature, science and art seem to have lent their stores to form the mind of the Prince," he wrote. "He is really an accomplished man, and withal, possesses so much good sense and consideration, that, taken apart from his playfulness and good humour, he might pass for an aged and experienced person, instead of a youth of two or three and twenty." He thought the Queen also intelligent, her observations very acute, and her judgment apparently matured "beyond her age."

Uwins commended the Queen and the Prince because they breakfasted, heard morning prayers and were out in the gardens "before half-past nine o'clock—sometimes earlier." He saw them too, in the evening, in moments "snatched from state, parade and ceremony," enjoying "each other's society in the solitude of the garden."

Victorian art was blossoming in other gardens, too. Pretty sentimentalities gave new excitement to painting and decoration. Victorian daughters were pressing pansies in books and they were embroidering valentines. Great ladies saw the Queen drawing and etching when they went to Court. When they returned to their country houses, they taught their children to do the same. Bunches of flowers were painted upon glass, and mittened fingers made magic patterns out of minute, coloured ribbons. Beads were assembled on to velvet in the shape of flowers and birds, and dutiful daughters copied the iris and the columbine, the rose and the water-lily, in translucent coloured wax which was protected under glass shades.

In May of 1842, a "thorough scamp" named John Francis fired a shot at the Queen. She met the occasion with Hanoverian courage. A few hours afterwards she drove out again while the man was still at large, giving him the opportunity of firing once more. This he did, delivering himself up to the law. Prince Albert shared the danger and afterwards wrote to his father of the "dreadful occurrence." He was returning with the Queen from the Chapel Royal, driving past a crowd of spectators under the trees, when he saw a man step out from the crowd and present a pistol full at him. "He was some two paces from us," wrote Albert. "I heard the

trigger snap, but it must have missed fire. I turned to Victoria, who was seated on my right hand, and asked her: 'Did you hear that?' She had been bowing to the people on the right, and had observed nothing."

They returned to the Palace. Even the footmen at the back of the carriage had not noticed anything amiss. The Queen and the Prince "felt sure he would again come skulking about the Palace," so they drove out, to give him the temptation which might betray him to the police. Albert continued his letter: "We . . . . gave orders to drive faster than usual and for the two equerries . . . . to ride close to the carriage. You may imagine that our minds were not very easy. We looked behind every tree, and I cast my eyes round in search of the rascal's face. . . ."

On the way home, a shot was fired at them, about five paces off. "It was the fellow with the same pistol—a little, swarthy, ill-looking rascal. The shot must have passed under the carriage. . . ." The wretch was caught, tried and deported for life. "I was really not at all frightened," wrote the Queen to her uncle. "Thank God, my Angel is also well."

Again in July, "a hunchbacked wretch" tried to shoot at the carriage in which the Queen, Prince Albert and King Leopold were sitting. The pistol missed fire and they drove on to the Palace.

Sir Robert Peel was in Cambridge, and when the news came to him, he abandoned his plans and hurried up to London. The strain of being so near to tragedy broke down any resentment the Prime Minister may have retained. When he saw the door open and the Queen come in, he was unable to control his emotions. He bowed before her and burst into tears. A common danger made them both more human. Peel was governing a country traversed by disorderly mobs and, like the Queen, he lived in danger of his life.

A few months afterwards, the Prime Minister's secretary was assassinated, in mistake for Peel. This time, the Queen's heart was softened. Her sympathy was roused and she wrote of Peel as ". . . . a great statesman, a man who thinks but little of party, and never of himself."

During her reign the Queen spent less than five weeks in Ireland, but her visits to Scotland covered almost seven years. Her

love for the Deeside began when she went there with the Prince for the first time, in 1842. This was their first romantic adventure. It was, in a sense, their honeymoon. The country was new to both of them and the Queen quickly gave her heart to the Highlands because Albert saw in them so much of the beauty he had left in Thüringen.

The Queen's Journal tells us how they steamed up the Scottish coast with their imposing squadron of nine ships. The shore was bright with bonfires. Every year after this they went to some part of Scotland. The Queen tasted her first oatmeal porridge and she thought it "very good." They came to be "quite fond of the bagpipes," and she loved the Highlanders, because they were "such a chivalrous, fine, active people." When she went with Prince Albert on to a lake, the boatman sang Gaelic boat-songs to them, in the language which was "so guttural and yet so soft." One Sunday morning, Victoria sat beside Albert and read him three cantos of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. They looked at old prints together, just as they had looked at drawings on the sofa at Kensington, before they were betrothed. Their mutual interests developed. While Albert went out in the morning and returned "dreadfully sunburned," the Queen painted and sketched the scenes around her, the little huts "so low, so full of peat smoke . . . the old women washing potatoes in the river, with their dresses tucked up almost to the knees."

"Oh! what can equal the beauties of nature," the Queen wrote in her Journal. As their ponies clambered up the slopes, they would pause here and there, the Queen to gather cairngorms beside the road and the Prince to search for rock crystals in the streams. Sometimes Albert would see ptarmigan and run off to shoot them. Victoria would wait for him beside the road, throwing stones into a stream.

They were away from the politicians and the tiresome relations, the discontented masses south of the Border and the whole irksome monotony of affairs. She found it "quite romantic . . . not a house, not a creature near us, but the pretty Highland sheep, with their horns and black faces." When they came back to the English coast again, it appeared to her to be "terribly flat."

## *Chapter Thirteen*

1843-1844

Stockmar came from Coburg in April to find that a few months had wrought a great change in Prince Albert. He thought him well and happy, though he frequently looked pale and worried. He admitted that the Prince was rapidly showing what was in him, that he was full of the practical talent which enabled him to see the essential points of a question.

But there were people whom the Prince had not yet conquered. Princess Alice was to be born in April so Prince Albert was obliged to take the Queen's place at the usual spring levées. There were peers in England who still resented the intrusion of what they thought to be a bourgeois court. When it was realised that the Queen would not be able to attend the levées, some of them made excuses and stayed away. The Queen was anxious: she told her Prime Minister that she would not allow any peer to snub her husband. Peel reassured her that only a "person of deranged intellect" could have a "hostile feeling" towards Albert, but he added that the attitude of the extremists might be considered by not insisting that they should kneel and kiss his hand.

Princess Alice was born on April 25th. Albert wrote to his brother: "To-day I can send you and dear Alexandrina the news you have certainly awaited for some days. At four o'clock this morning, Victoria was confined with a little daughter. She suffered much, but for only a short time, and now she feels as well as can be expected. The child is said to be very pretty. . . . Victoria is getting better very quickly and to-day she is already lying on her sofa."

Prince Albert made no written comments on the stubborn behaviour of the British aristocracy, but there was another source of similar annoyance which made him openly angry. In the early part of his life in England he had to suffer perpetual insults from the Dukes of Sussex and Cambridge and from the Duke of Cumberland, who was now King of Hanover. The Duchess of Cambridge had once refused to stand up at dinner when Prince Albert's health was proposed. These troubles had almost passed by the spring of 1843. Then the Duke of Sussex died and the old resentment was awakened, especially when the Duke's will was read and it was

found that he had asked to be buried in the public cemetery at Kensal Green rather than at Windsor. Two months afterwards, the King of Hanover came to London for the christening of Princess Alice. He began the visit in friendliness. Prince Albert thought that he looked miserable and old, but he was in a good humour. Also, he was well received in society. There was one surprise for Prince Albert, and he wrote of it to his brother. "What cannot be agreeable for the Hanoverians is that he took his seat in the House of Lords and swore the oath of fidelity and obedience. This is not wise, to be united with the idea of sovereignty."

The King of Hanover did not keep up his pretence of geniality for very long. A few weeks after the christening, he attended the marriage of Princess Augusta of Cambridge to the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg Strelitz. The ceremony was in Buckingham Palace, and there the King's ill temper against Queen Victoria and the Prince got the better of him. "It almost came to a fight with the King," Prince Albert wrote to Ernest. "He insisted on having the place at the altar, where we stood. He wanted to drive me away and, against all custom, he wanted to accompany Victoria and lead her. I was to go behind him.

"I was forced to give him a strong punch and drive him down a few steps, where the First Master of Ceremonies took him and led him out of the Chapel.

"We had a second scene, when he would not allow me to sign the register with Victoria. He laid his fist on the book. We manœuvred round the table and Victoria had the book handed to her across the table. Now the table was between us and he could see what was being done. After a third trial to force Victoria to do what he commanded, but in vain, he left the party in great wrath. Since then, we let him go, and happily, he fell over some stones in Kew and damaged some ribs."

Another year was closing, and when December came it seemed that the Queen and her husband had passed their examination with honours. They were still absurdly young to bear their responsibilities. At an age when many of his contemporaries were still dreaming upon the banks of the Cam, Albert had wrestled with the suspicions of a new country and he had mastered many of the details of government. Also, in four years, he had broken down

the Queen's imperiousness, as far as he was concerned, and she had come to enjoy his success more than her own. When he was received with affection in the provincial towns, she was exultant. He was her "beloved Angel." She set up a chair of State for him in the House of Lords, the same as her own. Greville said that the Prince was "as much King" as she could make him. "I doubt whether anybody ever did love or respect another as I do my dear Angel," the Queen wrote to her uncle. Ireland might be angry still; O'Connell might be waving his firebrand in defiance, and there might be idiots hiding in the gardens, waiting to threaten her life, but with Albert near her, nothing mattered. "We can bear all," she wrote to the King of the Belgians.

Victoria was becoming a spectacular Queen. A new, dynamic force impelled her. Petulance faded and patience was born. Five years before Ministers had bowed to her because she was the Queen. Now, when she came into a room, walking with the wonderful poise which never left her, people bowed before her because of her own greatness. She was happy. No tangle of psychological theories is needed to understand her development. Love had conquered all things. The force in her was confidence—the inevitable result of being a happy woman. In November, Albert wrote to Ernest: "Victoria has greatly improved and has become very reasonable and good natured."

The Prince was still contented to follow behind her. There was nothing spectacular about him, except that he was good-looking. His virtues had no superficial adornments to show them off. Duty had brought him to England. His reward was domestic contentment and the knowledge that his power was no less strong for being unseen.

When the year was over, Stockmar paid his first wholehearted compliment to his pupil. "You have availed yourself, with tact and success, of the first opportunity that has come in your way. The results are before us. Take then, in good part, my hearty congratulations upon them."

Albert's patience had brought him many little victories during 1843. He went to France with the Queen, finding the old King "in the third heaven of rapture." The whole family had received them with affection and the French had been "unflagging in their

courtesy." Louis Philippe's family had had a strong feeling that for the past thirteen years they had been placed under a ban. A visit from "the most powerful Sovereign in Europe" delighted them.

It was within the boundaries of Great Britain that Albert had made his greatest success. He had gone to Cambridge to receive the degree of LL.D., and the undergraduates had cheered him. They were all "young people" who, in time, would "have a certain part to play; they are the rising generation," the Queen wrote to her uncle. One of the professors was pleased with Albert's "good general knowledge of the old world."

At Windsor, Albert had taken over the home farm and the year's accounts showed a profit. The children were happy. Princess Victoria was "running and jumping in the flower garden," and, to her delight, the Queen saw that her son was growing to be like his father. There were tender letters from Lord Melbourne and bunches of daphne from his garden, "not so fine as they were." He was older and his spirit flagged a little, but the Queen stirred him into his old form when she suggested that dry champagne was perhaps unwholesome. He was "incredulous" and he assured her "that the united opinion of the whole College of Physicians and of Surgeons" would not persuade him "upon these points."

In November, Albert hunted with the Belvoir and everybody was pleased with his performance. The Queen announced to Leopold that Albert's riding so boldly had "made such a sensation that it has been written all over the country, and they make much more of it than if he had done some great act!" Here at last was a virtue which Englishmen could appreciate. Intellectual merit and artistic eagerness were pretty enough as affectations for professors and women. But such attributes had never been looked upon as part of the paraphernalia of an English gentleman. "The Prince rode admirably," wrote Anson, himself a fox-hunting man. The aristocracy began to think a little more highly of Albert's "capacity for Government which in the minds of English people is still associated with a knack of catching balls, jumping ditches, and pulling live foxes to pieces."<sup>1</sup>

In his letters to his brother, Albert made no boasts and few

<sup>1</sup> *The Coburgs*, by D'Auvergne, p. 179.

complaints. In August, he was "exhausted from parties, inspections of docks, wharfs, men of war, etc., etc.," but in November, he was delighted because the Nemours came to stay. He found Nemours "become much quieter than he was. We fought out many political fights, in great honesty and openness, and understood each other very well. . . ."

Christmas came, and the trees were ordered for the children. "It seems to me," he wrote, "as if it was not long ago that we were enchanted at the sight of our trees and especially you, enjoying the beloved quince-bread. Yesterday I had my first fall, while hunting, and I fell into a ditch near the railway station at Slough."

Prince Albert's father died in January of the New Year and Ernest became Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. Albert wrote to his brother "with a broken heart and bitter tears." "We got up happy and in best spirits this morning and then—all those black-edged letters came from members of the French family expressing their sympathy with our great loss. This is the only news we have yet had.

"How I should like to be with you and weep with you and see the beloved face once more, though it is cold!

"We no longer have any home, and this is a terrible thought. . . . I shall never see him again, never see my home with him as I knew and loved it and as I grew up in it. This is a break that you cannot feel in the same way. . . . I am far away from you, but the whole love of a brother fills my heart, and I shall always stand by you with advice and deed. . . . Poor subjects, be a father to them; the few who followed me here cannot stop their tears. Our poor little children do not know why we cry and they ask us why we are in black.

" . . . Victoria weeps with me, for me and for all of you. This is a great comfort for me. And your dear Alexandrina will weep with you. Let us take great care of these two jewels; let us love and protect them, as in them we shall find happiness again.

" . . . Victoria thanks you for your last letter. She sends you a pin with a curl of dear Father's hair. The reliques gave us much pleasure. How often have I seen the fruit knife in his hand!"

The Victorian fashion of mourning the dead had begun. Death wore new accoutrements. In the shadow of black-edged paper, jet

bracelets and impenetrable veils, sinners became saints in the memory of the mourners. So the Duke's misdeeds were forgotten.

In his letter to his brother, Albert wrote a sentence which showed once more that there was no longer any barrier between the Queen and himself. He said that Victoria was the treasure upon which his whole existence rested. "The relation in which we stand to one another leaves nothing to desire. It is a union of heart and soul and is therefore noble. . . ."

Prince Albert went to Coburg in March to equip himself with the knowledge which would make it possible for him to help Ernest in the future. The Prince had not been separated from the Queen since the day of their marriage, so there had been no letters exchanged between them. The letters written during this first separation show a more tender Albert, warm in his entreaties and endearments.

"My own darling," he wrote, from Dover Harbour. "I have been here about an hour, and regret the lost time which I might have spent with you. . . . Poor child! You will, while I write, be getting ready for luncheon, and you will find a place vacant where I sat yesterday. In your heart, however, I hope my place will not be vacant. . . . You are even now half a day nearer to seeing me again; by the time you get this letter, you will be a whole one—thirteen more, and I am again within your arms. . . . Your most devoted Albert." There was a postscript: ". . . I cannot go to bed without writing two words more. I occupy your old room. . . . We had a rather unpleasant voyage. I kept my seat on one spot all the way with my eyes shut, but I was far from easy in my mind. . . ."

Two days afterwards, Prince Albert was in Gotha. "Oh! how many varied emotions overwhelm me," he wrote back to England. "Remembrance, sorrow, joy, all these together produce a peculiar sadness. . . . Farewell, my darling, and fortify yourself with the thought of my speedy return. God's blessing rest upon you and the dear children. . . . I enclose an auricula and a pansy, which I gathered at Reinhardtsbrun. . . . I have got toys for the children, and porcelain views for you. . . ."

The Prince found Coburg marvellously grown in beauty. The valleys about the town were already awake with new leaves and flowers. "Oh! how lovely and friendly is this dear old country," he

wrote; "how glad I should be to have my little wife beside me, that I might share my pleasure with her!" He went to Rosenau and picked some spring flowers from the garden for the Queen. Five days afterwards he was at Windsor again. In his diary, which usually contained no adjectives or superlatives, he wrote: "*Great joy.*"

## *Chapter Fourteen*

1844-1846

The year 1844 was one of the grandest in Queen Victoria's reign. The rulers of Russia, France, Saxony and Prussia all came to England as her guests. King Leopold was pleased for he saw these tributes to the Queen as tributes also to the House of Coburg. He had been much amused by a rich and influential American who wished that some branch of the Coburgs might be able to provide a monarch for his country. It was true that the family had spread their carpet over Europe. The King's satisfaction would have been complete had he been able to foretell the circumstances of seventy-five years later when the Kings of Great Britain, Roumania and Bulgaria and the King of the Belgians would still show the particular talents of his family and still impose their personalities upon a world which had grown suspicious of the divine right of Kings. King Leopold had written to Queen Victoria, in 1841, "This globe will soon be too small for you and something must be done to get at the other planets."

In 1844, King Leopold and his pupils in England had every reason for pride. In June, the Emperor Nicholas of Russia arrived unexpectedly in London. He had been to England only once before, as a boy. Then he had surprised the Court by eschewing the comfort of a bed and sleeping upon a sack of straw. He had also kissed Countess Lieven's hand, which struck the English ladies as extremely odd. But he had also been thought "devilish handsome." Now that he came as an older man, mature and powerful, he professed great friendship for England and great admiration for Prince Albert. He told Lord Aberdeen that he should like to have the Prince for his own son. At the review of troops in Windsor Park, the Emperor turned to Prince Albert and said that he hoped they would meet on the battlefield some day, "on the same side." The parade was in the grand manner, but there was one human moment when Prince Albert had to march past at the head of his regiment. He lowered his sword in full military form to the Queen, but "with such a look and smile as he did it." The sentence is from Lady Lyttelton's reminiscences. She

added: "I never saw so many pretty feelings expressed in a minute."

The Queen's talent for entertaining gave the English Court a new kind of power among the Royalties of Europe. The Emperor of Russia went away enthralled, as did the King of the French when he visited England in October.

Here, also, was a simple monarch, who ate only twice a day and required nothing but a hard bed and a large table for his papers. . . . "He generally sleeps on a horse-hair mattress with a plank of wood under it . . . ." wrote King Leopold.

Again the Queen's fullest pleasure lay in the adulation heaped upon the Prince. She wrote to her uncle: "The King praised my dearest Albert most highly and fully appreciates his great qualities and talents—and what gratifies me *so much*, treats him completely as his equal, calling him '*Mon Frère*' and saying to me that *my husband* was the same as me, which it is—and '*Le Prince Albert, c'est pour moi le Roi.*'"

The King was to reply to the Address from the Corporation of London, and his speech had been carefully prepared for him. Almost at the last moment, he glanced at it and found that it had been translated into bad English. "*C'est déplorable,*" exclaimed the King, "*c'est pitoyable.*" So the King and the Queen and Prince Albert sat down and, between them, they wrote a new reply for the City of London.

None of Prince Albert's letters shows any enthusiasm for Louis Philippe. Any doubt as to the relationship between them was cleared away when the King exposed his true character in the affair of the Spanish marriages which caused so much anxiety between the years of 1840 and 1846.

While Louis Philippe was courting the friendship of the Queen and Prince Albert, he was also angling for power in Spain. The Queen of Spain and her sister were young and unmarried and Louis Philippe and his Minister, Guizot, set their hearts on marrying the Duc de Montpensier to the Queen, or, failing this, to her sister. There were two Bourbon Princes of the Spanish branch who were also eligible. One of these, Don Francesco de Assis, was a miserable fellow, so ill-favoured by nature that he was called Paquita (*Fanny*) by his family. It was certain that he had neither the wish nor the

capacity to become a father. There was a fourth candidate—Leopold, a brother of the Consort of the Queen of Portugal—another Coburg.

Dynastic ambitions spurred Louis Philippe and Guizot to bring about a marriage which would unite the two countries, but the newly formed English friendship stood in their way. By such a strong alliance the French might increase their power, but they would also alienate English affections. For England there were obvious dangers if a French prince shared the Spanish throne.

The Queen, Prince Albert, Louis Philippe, Guizot and Lord Aberdeen met at Eu and agreed that, for the sake of their friendship, the Duc de Montpensier should not marry the Spanish Princess until the Queen herself was married to one of the Spanish Bourbon Princes and had children to establish the succession. This meant that even if the Duc de Montpensier did marry the Spanish Princess, there would be no fear of his children coming too near to the Spanish throne. By making this concession, Louis Philippe induced Prince Albert and the Queen to promise that they would do nothing to urge the cause of Prince Leopold of Coburg, nor discourage the suit of the Bourbon Princes.

Suddenly, in 1846, Europe was astounded by the announcement of the double engagement: of the Queen to the Bourbon Prince, Don Francesco de Assis, and of her sister to the Duc de Montpensier. Louis Philippe and Guizot had treacherously and stupidly broken faith with Queen Victoria. They had chosen the unfortunate Don Francesco for the Queen, knowing that her virtue would be safe in his frail hands and that there could be no children by the marriage. Thus all power would pass to the Duc de Montpensier and his descendants. *Punch* represented Louis Philippe as Fagin, teaching his boys to pick pockets.

Palmerston had come into power as Foreign Minister in August of 1846. Guizot said of Palmerston: "Here is a man who has the reputation of being quarrelsome. If we have any quarrel with him, everyone will believe that it is his fault and not ours." Palmerston had written a dispatch, mentioning the Coburg Prince's name. He did not urge the marriage with Prince Leopold, but Guizot professed to see in Palmerston's dispatch sufficient reason for imagining that England was not keeping the Queen's promise. Palmerston

had played further into Guizot's hands by speaking strongly about the Government of Spain and the need for reform. In doing this, he gave moral support to the progressive party, which was the terror of the Queen Mother of Spain [Christina] and her advisers. Up to this time, she had expressed no antagonism to the idea of the marriage with Leopold, but, seeing many dangers in Palmerston's attitude, she threw herself entirely into the hands of the French, so that Louis Philippe was able to announce the engagements of the young Queen and her sister to the Bourbon Prince and his own son.

"Nothing can be more shameful and treacherous than the politics adopted by the French Court," Albert wrote to his brother, when the engagements were announced. "We have been shamefully betrayed and now the other party triumphs. A miserable triumph, to have betrayed a friend. . . ."

In the same letter, Prince Albert said that both the Queen Mother and the Queen of Spain had been in favour of Leopold's suit. When the French intrigue was complete, they "made use of the ill humour of the ladies to bring forward Don Francesco, an impotent and half a fool, and have made arrangements with Montpensier for the Infanta. King Louis Philippe had given us his word of honour never to think of this second marriage until the Queen was married and had children '*et cela ne sera plus une affaire politique.*' Now he declares he is no more bound to his word, because Leopold was proposed as a candidate, which Aberdeen promised should never be the case. The *bonne entente* has breathed her last. We are annoyed in the highest degree and in Spain the people are in full riot. We must hope the proverb: 'Honesty is the best policy,' will prove to be true."

In 1844, it was already certain that Duke Ernest would not have any children and Prince Albert assumed the duty of training one of his own sons to go back to rule the German Duchy. This son, Alfred, was born on August 6th, 1844. Albert wrote: "These lines are to announce the birth of a second son which heaven has graciously given us . . . . the child is unusually large and strong. . . . I cannot write much as I have to trumpet this news to all parts of the world."

Two weeks afterwards he wrote again to Ernest: ". . . The little one shall, from his youth, be taught to love the dear small country to which he belongs, in every respect, as does his Papa. I am sending a letter to Alexandrina asking her to be Godmother."

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert have been blamed for the Nottingham lace curtains, the baubles beneath glass, the *jardinières* and the lambrequins which the twentieth century dismisses as the paraphernalia of Victorian taste. It is true that the Prince did not improve every room that he touched, but he cannot be blamed for every wax flower that blossomed in Victorian England. His accusers never take into account that he was one of the first men in the country to buy primitives and form the nucleus of the fine collections in Buckingham Palace and the National Gallery.

The Prince had spent his childhood in castles which were the victims of rococo decorators and he had been brought up in a tide of inferior French furniture, gilt and marble, and sham Gothic façades. His taste may have been affected by these trappings of his childhood, but his knowledge of painting and architecture seemed to be separate from the fashions to which he succumbed. The noble pictures which he bought for the Royal collections must be remembered in his favour. It must also be recalled that he pleaded for the retention of the frescoes in the Chapel at Eton. He was overruled when he asked that they should not be covered by tall oak stalls. Also, when the Chapel was built at Wellington, he urged that Eton Chapel might be copied, instead of the monstrosity of the day.

One writer has offered as proof of Prince Albert's poor taste that he removed the Gainsboroughs from a drawing-room at Windsor and hung Winterhalters in their place. If he had gone further into the story, he would have found that it was the natural fashion in every country house to make room for the contemporary portraits of the family and move those of the older generations away, without consideration of their artistic value.

As a boy in Coburg, Albert had collected some fine early German wood carvings which may still be seen in the Feste Coburg. He gathered together his blue and white Coburg china and ruby glass goblets, making a brave show of his own choice amidst the inherited tawdriness. It was the same instinct that urged him to buy primitives in England, without aid or advice, at a time when no

other collector gave them a thought. When he offered part of the collection to the National Gallery, his contemporaries were still so unappreciative that they rejected most of them and accepted only two or three, as a gesture.

The vast chambers of Windsor and the Georgian rooms of Buckingham Palace were a suitable setting for the great occasions of the Queen's life. But Prince Albert had reconciled the Queen to his ideas of domestic simplicity and when they were alone together they talked of a small home of their own. The Queen wrote to Leopold of such a place, "quiet and retired, and free from Woods and Forests and other charming departments, which really are the plague of one's life." So they bought the estate of Osborne, in the Isle of Wight. The house was enlarged and here, "in a very quiet and retired place," they had a retreat from the "inquisitive and often impudent people."

The house was happily placed upon rising ground. Outside, Albert moved the earth to his own plans; he made terraces and gardens, summer-houses and winding walks. Wherever there was a "view," he placed a seat so that he might recline there in the evening with the Queen at his side. He was happy, "away from all the bitterness people create for themselves in London." The broad Solent flowed at the foot of the garden. "It is pleasant," wrote Lady Lyttelton, "to see how earnestly Prince Albert tries to do the best about this place, giving work to as many labourers as possible." The bailiff had dismissed some men "because it is harvest time, that they may work for others, telling them all, that the moment any man is out of employment, he is to come back here, and will, without fail, find work to do."

Within the house, the Prince had played at a hundred new schemes of decoration. The drawing-room ceilings were supported on immense, pseudo-marble pillars; the long rooms were crowded with tables and the tables were crowded with porcelain views, souvenirs and miniatures of historical buildings, in wood, ivory or silver. Every bowl was gay with flowers, picked by the children in the woods. In the passages, there were recesses, lined with Garter blue and crowned with gilded plaster shells, each framing a German avuncular bust. There was something intimate and unroyal about Osborne. Here were no Georgian ghosts, as there were at Windsor,

and the happy, healthy children were able to wander through the woods at their will, without fear of meeting the shades of their wicked uncles.

Even the Ministers felt a little ashamed of their pesterings when they opened their windows at Osborne in the evening and saw the Queen and Albert, still wandering in the garden, listening to the nightingales, or standing hand in hand on the edge of the woods, where Albert whistled to the birds "in their own long, peculiar note, which they invariably answered."

About a mile away from the house, Prince Albert made a Swiss chalet for the children and a miniature fortress, like the one he had made at Rosenau, as a child. He enlisted the help of the young princes, and with charts and spades he taught them the great secrets of war, as Uncle Leopold and Florschütz had taught Ernest and himself, twenty summers before.

Prince Albert had been married for five and a half years, but the Queen had never seen the Thuringian valley, whence he came to England. He had told her stories of his childhood. Her mother had also painted the Coburg scene for her, so that while their children played and tumbled at their feet, Albert and Victoria dreamed of the little Duchy, tucked away among the sweeping pine forests. Gay valentines came to them from their cousins. There were boxes of German biscuits and chairs made of Thuringian antlers. There were delicate drawings of the landscapes so dear to Albert's heart, so exciting to the Queen, since they were the setting whence he came to her.

She talked incessantly of the time when she would go with Albert to his home. The day came in August of 1845. The children were happy, and Peel was able to reassure them about the state of the country. Ireland was almost peaceful, for the Catholics and Protestants were breathless from their struggle, and they had settled down to a momentary truce. So the Queen and the Prince set out for Coburg by a tortuous and glorious road.

The party consisted of Lord Aberdeen, Lord Liverpool, Lady Canning and Lady Gainsborough. "You need not fear that these people will make any pretensions," Albert wrote to his brother. "They have already travelled with us and last autumn they lived with us in a miserable, small house in Scotland. . . . The principal

thing will be to keep the whole English colony together. . . . Do not separate us from them. . . . We do not expect any festivities. We only wish to have an opportunity of seeing the neighbourhood and the family."

" . . . If *Strangers* wish to come, don't encourage them to remain. They would only wish to watch us." "We are by no means expecting grand festivals. What I think would give Victoria a great deal of pleasure would be to see the children's procession at the Gregorius Festival. . . . Victoria likes to dance, especially at small *thé dansants*. You might arrange some. . . . Regarding the English way of keeping Sunday and the scruples belonging to it, I must mention that on Sundays we would not go to a ball or to the theatre, but there is no reason why we should not be happily assembled." A few days before they sailed he wrote again: "You need not arrange a chase, as Victoria does not like such pleasures and *I* prefer to stay with her. . . ."

They arrived at Antwerp on "a pouring melancholy evening." The Queen had never travelled very far before, so every scene which Albert showed her was a delight. She saw the women in the Antwerp streets, "in their hats and caps and cloaks, with their jugs of brass, going to market." She noted every new sight in her diary. She was like a child again, her face pressed against the carriage window, while Prince Albert explained this or that to her. He seemed to know almost everything.

Everywhere Victoria went she was acclaimed and honoured. Soldiers clicked their heels and saluted her; princes who barely spoke her language lifted their glasses and toasted her. In Cologne, the streets were sprinkled with eau-de-Cologne, so that her journey should be fragrant. In Bonn, the stiff-backed professors who had known Albert as a boy, came to smile upon him and to say how delighted they were with his progress and his great position. No longer was there any jealousy or fear of rivalry in the Queen. She gave Albert his glory; she smiled happily when the cheering was especially loud for him.

In Bonn, Albert took Victoria to the little house where he had lived as a student. For a moment they escaped from the bands and the trumpets and the sparkling glasses of wine. They were alone in the house where, in his teens, he had worked and dreamed. The

King of Prussia rose to toast the Queen at Brühl where the nobility of all the country had gathered to honour them. "Victoria" was the toast. The King rang his glass against Albert's, and the Queen's eyes brightened through her tears. She bent towards the King and kissed his cheek. Then they left the glory of great places. The kings and the princes withdrew from the procession and the cheering people were left on the other side of a forest. They came to Coburg and they were alone, in Albert's own country.

Victoria "began to feel greatly moved—agitated indeed in coming near the Coburg frontier." Everything was pretty and in miniature. The streets were crowded with girls, in white and green. The sun shone and showers of white blossoms fell about them. They bowed and they smiled. When the Burgomeister tried to speak his welcome, he was "quite overcome." Every eager hand in Coburg had made a wreath of flowers to throw to them. The Duchess of Kent, grown older, and with the quiet which age brings with it, was there to welcome them. There was no enmity in the world. Rosenau Castle had been prepared for them and there they went, driving out from the town, to the summer landscape which had not changed since Albert was born there twenty-six years before. Rosenau was just as it had always been in summer, with the harvesters in blue blouses, the pots of petunias, the chicory flowers shining in the grass, and the forest with its high, pointed pines, piercing the blue sky. "My Albert's birthplace," Victoria wrote in her diary, "the place he most loves." He "was so, so happy to be there," with her. It was "like a beautiful dream."

They celebrated Albert's birthday at Rosenau. Victoria could step from one small room to another and enjoy the grotesque painted walls, with the scenes of Swiss waterfalls, framed in painted convolvulus vines. There were bright blue ceilings sprinkled with silver stars. In the wallpaper of one room, she could see the holes Albert had made with his rapier, when he was young. She could rest her hands upon the table to which he had been lifted to be dressed. Almost one hundred years afterwards, a Nazi flag was to flutter from the high tower of Rosenau and the gardens through which they walked were to be overgrown and neglected. But in the summer of 1845, the castle was at peace.

On the morning of Prince Albert's birthday, he went into the

room in which he had been born. The Queen was beside him as he opened the window and looked down upon the fountain and the roses. The choir from the town had come to serenade them and, when the singing was ended, Albert talked to the Queen of his mother. They could look towards the distant fortress in which Luther had lived. It shone upon the hill, in a tide of pink and yellow light.

In the afternoon, when the princes and the peasants had all left their presents and departed, the Queen and Albert walked alone, by the stream and in the forest. Nothing would ever disturb their happiness again. The great farm wagons lumbered up the hill, their drivers wiping the sweat from their foreheads. The blackbirds flew down among the rich corn. The pine-trees sheltered Victoria as she walked. They came to a pool which Albert had known as a child. He made a drinking cup for Victoria, with his hands, because the water was cool and she was thirsty.

A peasant woman came along the path and when she saw them, she said, "Guten Abend." Victoria answered and gave her some money. The peasant woman shook her hand and thanked her. She wrote in her Journal, "I don't think she the least knew who I was."

When the Queen returned to the garden at Osborne, she wrote to the King of Prussia, "Germany and its kindly folk delighted me—almost too much I fear! Above all I was pleased by the atmosphere of cordiality and 'Gemütlichkeit' (a word for which there is not even an equivalent in other languages). I did not feel in any way a stranger. Our whole expedition from beginning to end seemed to be under the special protection of Heaven. . . ."

## *Chapter Sixteen*

1845-1848

The year had begun prosperously. New railways opened up the countryside, stimulating trade and giving confidence to the people. But December brought depression. After months of peace, the Sikhs invaded British India. They were defeated at Modkee and Ferozeshah. In New Zealand, the Maoris made another faint protest against the soldiers of "Wikitoria, the great white Queen." Issues even more terrible than these disturbed the peace of England. Political wranglings and failing crops were more immediate and more dramatic concerns than quarrels in the far-away and half-known corners of the earth.

In November, Prince Albert wrote to his brother: ". . . the potato crops have turned out very badly and will lead to the greatest political complications—it is impossible to argue with famished people." Less than a month afterwards, on December 5th, Sir Robert Peel wrote to the Queen assuring her that "in the present state of affairs," he could render more service to her and to the country "in a private than in a public station." He went to Osborne, to make his mournful report. Prince Albert made a memorandum of their conversation. Half the potatoes in Ireland were ruined by rot. Belgium, Holland, Sweden and Denmark had suffered in the same way, but they had opened their harbours and bought corn. Peel had proposed the same measure for England, and, by opening the ports, a preparation for the abolition of the Corn Laws. His colleagues had voted against him, and he had resolved to resign. Prince Albert wrote of Peel's arrival at Osborne: ". . . he was visibly much moved and said to me that it was one of the most painful moments of his life, to separate himself from us. . . . After we had examined what possibilities were open for the Crown, the conclusion was come to that Lord John [Russell] was the only man who could be charged with forming a Cabinet." When the Queen had agreed in favour of Lord John, Peel said that he would support him and use all his influence with the House of Lords to prevent their impeding his progress.

Peel was greatly moved, not only because of the loss of power, but because, as Albert wrote, "of the breaking up of those relations in

which he stood to the Queen and me, and the loss of our society, which was for him a loss for which there was no equivalent. . . ." Albert added, including Lord Aberdeen in his regret: ". . . On our side, the loss of two so estimable men, who possess our whole and perfect confidence in public as well as in private affairs, and have always proved themselves true friends, leaves *a great gap.*" Peel wrote of the occasion: "I will not say more than that the generous support which I have uniformly received from Her Majesty and from the Prince, and all that passed on the occasion of the retirement, made an impression on my heart that can never be effaced."

On December 29th, Lord John Russell had to confess his inability to form a Government. He "handed back with courtesy the poisoned chalice to Sir Robert." Albert was happy. "We are *seelenfroh* (glad in soul) that we have survived the ministerial crisis of fourteen days duration and are now standing exactly where we stood before—upon our feet, whereas during the crisis, we were very nearly standing on our heads." Albert wrote to Stockmar, saying that he believed that the crisis had "been a source of real advantage to the Crown, by producing a widely spread feeling that amid all the general confusion and heat of party, at least one person has remained calm and free from party spirit, this person being the Queen." He did not add that she drew much of her calm from the qualities of his own character and advice.

Peel came back into office, but in June of 1846 he went once more to Osborne to tender his resignation. This time, wrote Prince Albert, he was "evidently much relieved in quitting a post the labours and anxieties of which seem almost too much for anybody to bear."

Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston came into power again. The Queen looked upon Peel and Aberdeen as "irreparable losses to us and the Country." They were "devoted friends." Albert and the Queen felt "so safe with them." She added, in a letter to her uncle, that now she was obliged to deal with Lord John and Palmerston, the contrast was "very striking; there is much less respect and much less high and pure feeling."

The Prince's character developed under the strain put upon him. He sought no credit for himself. The most certain proof of his increasing strength is in the Queen's letters. Clear thinking and

easy use of language place her letters among the most graphic of her time. If one reads them at the same time as the Prince's, one sees that while her phrases were her own, the thought behind them was a collaboration. A hundred times in the correspondence of 1845-46, one feels that her judgments were strengthened by the power which was beside her all the time. There is no written statement which can be quoted to prove this, unless one accepts the occasional ecstasies of the Queen in her letters to her uncle. "Albert's use to me, and I may say to the *Country*, by his firmness and sagacity is beyond all belief in these moments of trial," she wrote, when Lord John Russell and Palmerston took the places of Peel and Aberdeen.

Even after eight years of service, Prince Albert did not escape censure and calumny. The peers were still unable to understand his cosmopolitan interests and his desire to spend his time with artists and thoughtful people. The Queen was almost pathetic in her desire for Albert's happiness and she grasped every little proof that he was winning public affection. The Duke of Buckingham, "who was immensely proud," had carried coffee to Albert, "after dinner on a waiter . . . himself." She was so delighted that she wrote of the evening to her uncle and added: "Everywhere my dearest Angel receives the respect and honours I receive." On another occasion, when one of the children was struggling with a glove, the Prince took him on his knee and helped him. Lady Lyttelton happened to be standing near by and she said: "It is not every Papa who would have the patience and kindness." For this she got "such a flashing look of gratitude from the Queen."

Prince Albert's home life and the affairs of government were not enough for him and he continued to seek the friendship of painters and scientists. This taste brought a strange protest from King Leopold, who wrote to Queen Victoria that "dealings with artists" required "great prudence." He added: "They are acquainted with all classes of society and for that very reason dangerous." Prince Albert did not allow this narrow view to affect his behaviour. He continued to go among middle-class people, sharing their interests and talking to them of schools and docks and architecture and warehouses. He went to Liverpool in July of 1846 and, standing beside the mayor, he was assured

that the people appreciated the zeal he was showing "in promoting the best interests of mankind." His solidity appealed to them and neither his culture nor his manners were beyond their understanding. With mayors and councillors he could talk of welfare and progress—religion, science and philanthropy. "I have done wonders of activity," he wrote to the Queen from Liverpool, sending her a flower and a programme of the procession. But the Queen hated these days of separation. "I feel very lonely without my dear Master," she wrote to Stockmar. ". . . without him everything loses its interest . . . it will always be a terrible pain for me to separate from him, even for two days; and I pray God never to let me survive him."

Eight years had passed since Albert came to England. It was an occasion for Stockmar to write one of his serious reports. He thought Albert had made "great strides." He wrote: "Place weighty reasons before him and at once he takes a rational and just view. . . . He has also gained much in self-reliance. His natural vivacity leads him at times to jump too rapidly to a conclusion and on occasion he acts too hastily, but he has grown too clear-sighted to commit any great mistake. He will now and then run against a post and bruise his shins." Then he added, "But a man cannot become an experienced soldier without having been in battle and getting a few blows. . . . His mind becomes every day more active, and he devotes the greater part of his time to business, without a murmur.

"The Queen also improves greatly. She makes daily advances in discernment and experience; the candour, the love of truth, the fairness, the considerateness with which she judges men and things, are truly delightful, and the ingenuous self-knowledge with which she speaks about herself is simply charming."

Among those who had satirised Prince Albert when he came to England, was a vindictive poet who wrote of "Saxe-Coburg's pauper Prince." He had played with the rumour that Albert was a Roman Catholic.

*The youngster's faith is made of easy stuff,  
Ready to turn and pliable enough;  
No bigot he, to one or t' other creed—  
Saxe-Coburg owns no martyrs in her breed.*

The verse was no doubt inspired by King Leopold's willing conversion from his Lutheran faith, when he became the Catholic King of the Belgians. The prosperous Coburgs had given Belgium a King, England a Queen and her husband, and Portugal, a Prince Consort. In later years they were to give Bulgaria a King and Leopold's daughter was to cross the Atlantic, to be Empress of Mexico. In other countries too, they won influence and reputation.

The character which made it possible for Leopold to change from the creed of Luther to that of Rome appeared in almost every Coburg, in one form or another. They were able to adapt themselves to the country of their adoption, and afterwards, to the circumstances of the life about them.

It might almost be said that the idea of constitutional monarchy and liberal government as it is known to-day was born in Coburg. In the late 'forties, while France, Prussia, Italy, Portugal and Spain were torn and devastated by revolt, England and Belgium remained comparatively calm. Leopold had long ago foreseen that the old kind of monarchy was doomed and that the mass of people were educated to a point where they would demand a voice in their own government. Foreseeing this, he had ruled the Belgians for their own good and not for his own enrichment.

These ideas of liberal government had been the essence of his education of the Queen and Prince Albert. Leopold and Albert sought to achieve, through constitutional monarchy and liberal government, what the misguided politicians of other countries thought could be won only through bloodshed and revolution. They tried to reconcile the Crown to the enlightened people, through the liberality of their own government, rather than wait for the people to emancipate themselves through violence.

The satirist who accused Albert of not having martyr's blood in his veins, might also have added that he had nothing of the tyrant in his make-up. He was one of the first statesmen of his century to work for the welfare of the people, without regard for their wealth, their birth or their influence. As a farmer and a landlord, as a father and a husband, he showed England that he was no idle aristocrat or landowner. During the time when Europe was distraught and Ireland was in the terrors of famine, he threw every idea and energy he had into the cause of what he described as "that

class of our community which has most of the toil and least of the enjoyments of this world." He was for ever depressed by the lot of the British workman. "I never have heard a real shout in England," he complained.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were bringing the Crown closer and closer to the people, by the example of their life at home. Victoria may have been proud, and conscious of her Crown in dealing with Princes and Ministers and courtiers, but she was still true to the early picture of the child who trampled on the music master and who, the next moment, sent an umbrella out to an old man in the rain.

However much Prince Albert regretted Peel's retirement, he tried to encourage the new Ministers towards his non-party ideal. He wrote to Lord Palmerston on a certain matter and said that the Queen begged that he would never hesitate to send her "such private communications," however unreserved they might be in their language. He said it was their "chief wish and aim" that by hearing all parties, they could "arrive at a just, dispassionate, and correct opinion upon the various political questions."

But the tone of the Royal correspondence had changed. Several times during 1847 there were angry letters from the Queen to Russell and to Palmerston. She reprimanded Palmerston for sending drafts to Lisbon without submitting them to her first, and Lord John also came in for a scolding for appointing a Physician in Ordinary without consulting her.

In the following year, the anger of the Court reached the point of open indignation. The Queen assured Lord John Russell that she was highly indignant at the way Palmerston conducted affairs as Foreign Minister, and in September she felt that she "could hardly go on with him"—she had no confidence in him—she thought his writings "as bitter as gall" and was wholly displeased by his existence.

There had been one personal conquest which allowed Albert to contemplate his slowly growing popularity among people outside the company of statesmen and courtiers. In February, he was elected Chancellor of Cambridge University. He had to pit his popularity against that of Lord Powis. There were 1,790 votes, and of these, 953 were for the Prince. Sixteen of the twenty-four

Professors voted for him and nineteen of the thirty Senior Wranglers.

He wrote his stepmother a long letter from Osborne, whither he had gone "in hopes to inhale the spring by the sea-shore under blossoming myrtles, laurels, and magnolias." But he found nothing but "frost and parching east wind." He added, as an incidental footnote: "Meanwhile I have become Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, which has elected me after a violent party struggle, in which, however, I took no part whatever."

The Queen went with Albert to Cambridge for the proud occasion. She was delighted. The sky was "very blue, the sun very, very hot." Albert had to advance towards her "in his beautiful dress of black and gold," and then he had to read his address. Madame Bunsen, who was with them, described the pretty scene, the "admirable command of countenance of both," and how the Queen "only smiled upon the Prince at the close, when all was over."

They stayed for three days. One evening was so beautiful that they walked together, after the ceremonies. It was ten o'clock, and they went "in curious costumes." "Albert in his dress coat, with a mackintosh over it; I, in my evening dress and diadem, and with a veil over my head. . . . All was so pretty and picturesque . . . . nothing seemed wanting, but some singing, which everywhere but here in this country we should have heard. A lattice opened, and we could fancy a lady appearing, and listening to a serenade."

The glory of being Chancellor was not enough for Albert. When he returned to Windsor he asked for information about the University studies and decided that classics and mathematics were pursued out of all proportion. To make any criticism of an aged University called for courage as well as wisdom. Albert lacked neither, but he trod delicately among the corns of the Dons.

He had the support of Sir Robert Peel in his schemes to broaden the field of Cambridge studies. The Vice-Chancellor had actually urged that a century should pass before new discoveries in science should be admitted into University instruction. Such conservative methods stirred the Prince and Peel to indignation, but they worked cautiously, knowing the "dread of innovation" among the Professors.

Albert invited the Vice-Chancellor to Windsor. He found that metaphysics, psychology, political economy, oriental languages, modern languages, geography, chemistry and astronomy were excluded from the studies. The Vice-Chancellor admitted the mistakes but he demurred faintly because it was so difficult to convince the heads of colleges that innovations were justified. Albert knew that his own intervention would arouse the Dons to defend their ancient methods, so he prepared the cannon balls for another man to fire. He sought results, but no credit for himself. The Vice-Chancellor left Windsor and went back to the Cam, full of Albert's new ideas.

The Prince offered prizes and suggested subjects for the English prize poem. A plan of reform was drawn up, with broader fields of study and more liberal opportunities for honour. The scheme was described as "broad enough to satisfy the demands of all moderate reformers," and it was adopted by a "triumphant majority." The Vice-Chancellor openly declared that Prince Albert's election had brought in "a new and glorious era" in academic history.

Many prejudices against the Prince faded after this new success. *The Times*, which had never been very kind to him, spoke of the nation's "debt of gratitude" to him since he was the "first to suggest, and the most determined to carry out" the changes. *The Examiner* greeted the "student of Saxe-Gotha" who had "weighed Cambridge in the balance" and found it to be "a sham." The writer congratulated "the country on its Prince and the University on its Chancellor." Even *Punch* withheld the bitterness with which it had greeted all his efforts. Leech took up his pencil and drew Albert "taking the *Pons Asinorum*, after the manner of Napoleon taking the Bridge of Arcola."

*Chapter Seventeen*

1847-1848

The Court went to Scotland in August of 1847. This had now become the habit for their summer holiday. A reporter who saw Prince Albert, said that he "looked pleased with everything, and everybody, and with himself too." Albert quoted the sentence in a letter to the Duchess of Kent, and added: "I must also confess that the reporter was right . . . is not that a happy state?"

Within a few days, he was deep in German politics again. "My own view," he wrote, "is that the political reformation of Germany lies entirely in the hands of Prussia, and that Prussia has only to will, in order to accomplish these results." He had the temerity to write to the King and urge him to realise that the day was past when monarchs might make treaties without consulting the wishes of their people. But the King of Prussia was deaf to Albert's liberal opinions.

When Albert was not pondering over the state of Europe, he set down his opinion of English politicians. He thought Lord Grey "positive in his views, fond of discussion," but "open to argument, and, if worsted . . . ready to own it at once, and to adopt the argument by which he was overthrown." Of Lord Palmerston he said that he "acts less upon principle; still obstinate although he is, he always gives in when driven into a corner by argument." He added: "The political horizon grows darker and darker. Italy, Greece, Spain, and Portugal are in a state of ferment."

Thus was the holiday clouded. But there were drives in the pony carriage, through the wild, beautiful country. This summer, the Queen and the Prince stayed in a shooting lodge, at Ardverikie, "with many nice rooms in it." Stags' horns were placed around the outside and in the passages, and the walls of the drawing-room were "ornamented with beautiful drawings of stags, by Landseer." Even in the Highlands, Albert could not escape Stockmar's little lectures. "Let your unceasing study, your unceasing occupation, be human nature in all its length and breadth, and consider politics only as the means of doing service, as far as in you lies, to the whole human race."

Prince Albert enjoyed his rest in Scotland, and the Queen,

sharing his pleasure, wrote: "Really, when one thinks of the very dull life, and particularly the life of self-denial, which Albert leads, he deserves every amusement. And even about his amusements he is so accommodating, that I am deeply touched by it. He is very fond of shooting, but it is all with the greatest moderation."

About a mile from Windsor Castle, set in a wooded part of the park, was Frogmore House, about which there was a charm and quiet beauty which seemed to protect it from all ugly intrusions. It was here that the Duchess of Kent lived for many months of the year, near enough to her daughter and her nephew to be able to lunch with them and walk with them and join in their family life when they were at Windsor.

The house was planned on modest lines. Its colonnade looked out upon a small lake, and fearless water-fowl, peering from among the bulrushes. In the winter time, when the scene was white and still, Albert would skate there, the Queen and her mother watching the slim, graceful figure gliding so picturesquely before them, the snowflakes shaken from the trees caught in his hair.

Lady Augusta Bruce was among the ladies who lived with the Duchess at Frogmore, and she wrote many letters describing the scenes of her life. "Do you smell the roses and the honeysuckle in my glass . . . do you see the swans on the lake and the birds hopping about on the short grass under the big oak-trees?"

Sometimes the Queen would come down from the Castle *quite alone*. "Her kindness, her anxiety, the tenderness," were "too dear." But it was Prince Albert who captured the hearts of this little, lesser Court, tucked away among the trees. He was shy—but they loved his "good sense and *feeling*." "The blessing he is to the Queen and country," wrote Lady Augusta, who was never wild or unbalanced in her enthusiasms. She commented on ". . . the good he does, his kindness, his well-conditioned mind and tastes, and his anxious desire to do what is right and encourage and develop in others all that is good."

The Duchess had gathered a company of ladies about her, one of them German, the others English. They wrote fragrant letters and they learned to play new songs upon the pianoforte. Sometimes there was a fashionable duet, just arrived from Paris. They sat in the Flower Room, with the sun streaming in upon them,

exchanging gentle gossip or watching the children playing upon the lawn.

Sometimes, the Queen and the Prince would dine with the Duchess and after dinner they would sit upon a sofa and talk. There would be puns and jokes, and the Duchess would laugh and say that her ladies were very "notty." When her daughter had gone, she would play upon the pianoforte and sing, or she would sit at the table and play whist, until her ladies would look anxiously at her nodding head and see that she was almost asleep.

In Coburg, Duke Ernest's married life was less peaceful than it had been in the beginning. His wife retired more and more into a life of her own. But there were greater troubles than this in store for Ernest. In February, the Grand Duke of Baden had been forced to give his people liberal concessions, including trial by jury. Many other little duchies were inspired by Baden's success, and the cry for emancipation spread all over Germany. It went north and devastated Prussia. It went south and into the quiet of the Thuringian valley. Europe lost its head in the new experiment.

"All I hear from home is dreadful," wrote Prince Albert. There were riots among the peasants in both Gotha and Coburg. "Such an outbreak of the people is always something *very dreadful*, and what will be done now, will be done hurriedly and therefore badly." Ernest had already set a liberal plan before the insurgents of Gotha, but they were still dissatisfied. Albert wrote: "The claims themselves seem to contain nothing but what you have already proposed. The only difficult point is the question about the domains. Would it not be best to divide them?"

Prince Albert was willing that the people of his country should have a voice in their own Government. He saw the advantages of constitutional rule in England and he believed that the Coburg-Gotha constitution should consist of two Chambers, one of the Princes and one of the people. He thought that the laws for election should be liberal and extended, but he was adamant where the rights of the army were discussed. Soldiers might assist lawful authority, but they must not be the executors of the law. "*In Germany and on the continent the mistake is made as a rule, of looking upon the military as executors of the law, but the army has, in reality, nothing to do with law, and it should be called in for help only when it is proved that*

*law has been trespassed and that a state of anarchy has broken out. Only then it is the duty of the military power to step in and assist the lawful authority. . . .*

"Everything looks rather black in Germany just now, but I don't give up hope. . . . The proofs of the people's attachment to the royal houses are not to be despised, and the desire for a united Germany is laudable."

Two months afterwards, he wrote: ". . . Should the Sovereignty fall from Coburg altogether (God grant it may not be the case) I don't see why my *eldest* son should not have the right of succession. . . . I hear that Altenburg recommends that I and my children should be excluded from the succession in Coburg and Gotha. . . . It will be worth while to keep your eyes on this question."

Duke Ernest lost neither his land nor his power, although both were reduced under the new spell which was being cast over Europe.

Early in the new year, Madame Adelaide, sister and counsellor of Louis Philippe, died in Paris. The anger of both Queen Victoria and Prince Albert against the King was softened, and they wrote kindly letters to him. The Queen was afraid that people might misconstrue her sympathy and see some political purpose behind it, but she preferred this risk rather than that she "should appear unfeeling and forgetful of former kindness and intimacy." So the resentment over the Spanish marriages was softened. It was well, for in two months' time, Louis Philippe was to abdicate and seek refuge in England. His behaviour over the Spanish marriages had belittled his country's reputation and the French people were conscious of their humiliation. In their unrest they nursed all their complaints into one hatred; their King and their statesmen had indulged in corruption and bribery and they had let France down in the eyes of the world. The people rose in a tempest about their Sovereign and his Government, so that Louis Philippe and Guizot were forced to fly the country. Stockmar had written of the King's "blind obstinacy" and of Guizot's "vain and boundless self-sufficiency." These qualities did not help them now.

Prince Albert pleaded with Stockmar to come to him during these terrible changes. If only Stockmar could be with him in the "political observatory," to talk about everything and help him to

reconcile theories with action! In the meantime, Louis Philippe was making a humble and pathetic escape from his country. He had evaded capture by back doors, disguise and subterfuge. There was little honour in his going.

The Queen and Albert sympathised with their "poor French relations," and the Queen was moved by the plight of Princess Clémentine, who could not sleep, even when she was safe in England, because her nights were haunted by the "horrible creatures" and "those unkind, fiend-like faces."

The Queen and Albert were willing to do everything they could "for the poor dear family," but they knew also that it would be necessary to recognise the new Government. "It will not be pleasant for us to do this, but the public good and the peace of Europe go before one's feelings," the Queen wrote. She added: "God knows what one feels towards the French."

Prince Albert's sympathies and thoughts were suddenly diverted from the chaos of Europe by the death of his grandmother, the old Duchess of Gotha. Much of the womanly tenderness and love in his early life had come from her, and the affections of his childhood were still warm enough for her death to devastate him. The Queen wrote: "My poor Albert . . . is so pale and sad, it breaks my heart." "The dear good Grandmamma!" Albert wrote to his step-mother. "She was an angel upon earth, and to us ever so good and loving."

The new year had come in darkly for all Europe. The *democratic* age was not being born without terrible pain. "My heart is heavy," wrote Albert. "I lose flesh and strength daily. . . . European war is at our door, France is ablaze in every corner. . . . I am not cast down, still I have need of friends," he pleaded to Stockmar. ". . . Come, as you love me. . . ."

Three weeks afterwards, Princess Louise was born. Albert "was often full of misgivings because of the many moral shocks which have crowded upon Victoria of late." But the Queen's courage was tremendous. "Great events make me calm. It is only trifles that irritate my nerves," she wrote to her uncle. "But *I feel* grown old and serious, and the future is very dark."

At last the Queen and Albert saw the French fugitives, "humbled, poor people they looked." Louis Philippe had gone to live at

Claremont. In her concern for them, the Queen wrote to her old friend: "Lord Melbourne's kind heart will grieve to think of the real want the poor King and Queen are in. Their dinner-table containing barely enough to eat. . . . Truly the poor old King is sufficiently punished for his faults."

Prince Albert rose above his sorrow to grapple with the affairs of the world again. The new fever for freedom was spreading all over Germany. He regretted that the excitement made it "impossible for the educated and thinking Germans to follow the French experiment with undivided attention. . . . It shows that when riotous people madly interfere with the wheelwork of the social machine, which is driven more by natural law and natural power, that the machine is destroyed and all natural power is let loose against society. The circle is becoming narrower and narrower and the catastrophe is coming on visibly. An outbreak in Germany is unfortunately to be expected, and the Almighty have mercy on the Germans if they are not unanimous."

The fever reached England. A crowd rushed from Trafalgar Square to Buckingham Palace, shouting "*Vive la République*," breaking the lamps as they went, and headed by a youth wearing epaulettes. The guard was turned out, the youth was arrested and he began to cry. Leech turned the incident into a joke for *Punch*.

On April 11th, Albert wrote again to his brother. "Yesterday we had to stand our test." Fifteen thousand people were going to meet on Kennington Common, with Fergus O'Connor to lead them. Albert continued his letter: "The monster meeting did not take place. Three hundred thousand special constables had registered to maintain order. They all carried only a staff. The troops were hidden. Some gentleman had informed Mr. Fergus O'Connor that if anything dreadful were to happen, he would be shot. All had its effect."

To Stockmar he wrote: "We had our revolution yesterday, and it ended in smoke. London turned out some hundreds of special constables; the troops were kept out of sight, to prevent the possibility of a collision, and the law has remained triumphant. I hope this will react with advantage on the continent." He added: "Ireland still looks dangerous."

The European disasters spread farther south in March, when the

Lombards revolted against Austrian rule in Milan. Twenty-two days afterwards the King of Sardinia determined to advance with his army into Milan, praying and fighting for Italian unity. The Venetians, the Tuscans and the Romans threw their strength and fortune into the campaign, and the Pope was obliged to bow to the wishes of his people and declare war on Austria. Thus Austria was forced to fight for her Italian Provinces, while she was also threatened by insurrection.

Prince Albert set down many wise theories about these tumults in Europe. But the misery and disease in Ireland pleaded for something more tangible than theories. Young Ireland had urged the unhappy people to use molten lead and vitriol for their revenge, and to maim the horses of the rich by spreading broken glass upon the streets. Famine had killed reason among the Irish people and their defiance of the law was terrible. The man who had no gun to use against England was bidden to sell his garment to buy one.

In England too, the Chartist had been refreshed for new riots. "The organisation of these people is incredible," Albert wrote to Stockmar. "They have secret signals and correspond from town to town by means of carrier pigeons . . . if they could, by means of their organisation, throw themselves in a body upon any one point, they might be successful in a *coup-de-main*." Yet he thought that the loyalty of the country was great. "Commerce is at a deadlock," he wrote, "and manufactures depressed; numbers of citizens are out of work, and the prospects of the revenue are gloomy."

"I am often very sad," wrote the Queen. But Albert was her constant pride and she talked of the courage and comfort he gave her. "He has that happy gift of constant cheerfulness, which is a treasure in these times."

The training of their children taxed every spare hour of their time. There were five in the nursery and schoolroom and they were already showing their individual needs to be different. Prince Albert wrote of them to his old tutor in Coburg: "The education of five such different children (for they are none of them the least like each other, in looks, mind or character) is a difficult task. They are a great deal with their parents and are very fond of them. I don't interfere in the details of their upbringing but only superintend the principles which are difficult to uphold in the faces of

so many women, and I give the final judgement. From my verdict there is no appeal. Unfortunately I am also the executive power and have to carry out the sentences. . . . The eldest speak and read English, German and French very well, and write them to a certain extent."

## *Chapter Eighteen*

1848-1849

Prince Albert disliked the English fashion of living in social compartments. One night at dinner he deplored the way that British Ministers abroad imported the English "*exclusive system of society*" into the countries to which they were appointed. He thought that Ministers and officials should mix with people "of all grades." His opinion of the relationship between employers and working men in Britain was equally genial and without prejudice. In May he was asked to take the chair at a meeting of a society for improving the conditions of the working classes. He disliked the patronage which inspired many similar efforts, and instead of damning strikers, he reprimanded the capitalists themselves. He warned them to be careful "to avoid any dictatorial interference with labour and employment." He pleaded for freedom of thought and independence of action for the working men and he told the capitalists quite candidly that it was only ignorance which prevented the two classes from having confidence in each other. His speech fell on English ears as a disturbing novelty.

In July of 1848 Prince Albert went to York, to speak to the Royal Agricultural Society and he pleased the Yorkshire farmers by using the phrase, "We agriculturalists of England." He was sensible of his success and wrote eagerly to Stockmar. "I had to speak . . . and was immensely applauded for what I said. . . I only mention it because I believe it will give you pleasure, as you have often urged me to have more confidence in matters of this kind."

But the Prince was weighed down by the number of his duties. "I never remember to have been kept in the stocks to the same extent as I am just now," he wrote to his stepmother, in Coburg. "The mere reading of the English, French and German papers absorbs nearly all the spare hours of the day; and yet one can let nothing pass without losing the connection and coming in consequence to wrong conclusions."

In August the Court withdrew to Balmoral. Before the year ended, Melbourne died, bereft of almost every power he had enjoyed. The Queen paused to recall the first years of his kindness.

But she shuddered at the memory of her girlhood. "God knows! I never wish that time back again," she wrote to her uncle.

During the weeks in the Highlands Prince Albert breathed freely, stretched his arms before the Scottish scene and was happy again. Balmoral was situated in the healthiest part of the Highlands and Albert loved the mountain solitude, where he rarely saw a human face. "The wild deer come creeping stealthily round the house." He wrote, "I, naughty man, have also been creeping stealthily after the harmless stags. . . ."

He dreamed of a castle here, grander than the little one in which they stayed during the summer of 1848. In the evening he would sit by an open window with the air from the birch wood fresh upon his face, and he would take out paper and pencil and sketch his dream. He drew the turrets and the arches of the doors—he planned the windows and the rooms. The greater Balmoral, a fantastic baronial castle in Victorian dress, fell from his pencil. Several more years were to pass before his dream came true.

The Coburg idea of discipline was strong in Queen Victoria and Albert. The Queen still smarted from the holly which her mother had pinned to the neck of her dress, as a sput towards deportment. Albert had chosen as tutor for his son a man who also believed in violent methods of teaching. When he wished Prince Albert Edward to prove his faith in science, he told him to plunge his hand in ammonia and then into molten lead. The boy had faith, or a kind of fear which was more terrible than his fear of physical pain. He plunged his hand into the ammonia and then into the molten lead. Thus he came to knowledge.

The greatest mistake in Prince Albert's life was in the way he sought to educate his eldest son. When the baby was born, Prince Albert had said that the "greatest object must be to make him as unlike as possible to any of his great-uncles." He said nothing of his own blood, but Greville noted in his diary that it would be a further good fortune if "no portion" of the Coburg blood should be "found flowing in his viens and tainting his disposition."

Depressed by their fear and shocked by the memory of the wicked great-uncles, the Queen and Prince Albert devised terrible plans to make the boy in his father's image. Nothing could have been less possible. Their son was a pleasure-loving Hanoverian, as

his mother had been in the beginning. There was little of his father in the boy. Prince Albert had cried with shyness at a children's dance in Coburg. The new Prince, "wellnigh from his cradle . . . showed signs of social instinct." His father liked learning and grand opera. The boy liked life and he had a taste for the operette.

Lady Lyttelton had taken charge of the children when they were babies and from the beginning, Princess Victoria had shown a happy tendency towards German thinking. She was quick to learn, superior to "Bertie" in intelligence, and she had a touch of her father's scholarship. From her cradle she grew towards her important and sad destiny in Prussia.

But it was "Bertie" who won Lady Lyttelton's heart. While his father and the tyrannical figure of Stockmar frowned their "Thou shalt nots" at him, Lady Lyttelton brought a more rosy tint into the nursery. She saw merit in his manners; she thought his "childish dignity very pretty to witness." She saw intelligence in "his large, clear blue eyes." But Lady Lyttelton was not alone in the nursery, for there were three special governesses, English, French and German, chosen by Stockmar. The education was planned according to the desire of the master, not to the capacity of the child. There were "a few passions and ravings" which were viewed with alarm, but they were not recognised as signs that the Prince needed tenderness as well as instruction.

Prince Albert wrote to his brother of his own contentment, but people who saw him spoke of the wistful expression upon his face when it was in repose. He had been lonely for so long that when his son looked up to him from the drudgery of the school-room, there was little understanding or sympathy between them. The garden of Rosenau, the games, the ginger bread, the feasts, and the romantic forests were forgotten.

While England was slowly becoming conscious of the young Prince; while the people found a new delight in seeing him in his sailor suit at Cowes or bowing in a carriage in the streets of Dublin, Stockmar and Prince Albert burned the midnight oil over formidable plans for his education. Nothing was to be left to chance. There was to be unceasing surveillance by carefully chosen tutors who could answer Stockmar's definition of "persons morally good, intelligent, well informed and experienced who fully enjoyed the

parental confidence." In later years, King Edward VII looked back with pain on these plans for his education.

In the spring of 1849, the Prince's first tutor arrived. He was Henry Birch. The educational scheme was outlined for him and he set about his duties. Just as Henry Birch watched his pupil with care, lest he should falter, so was Birch himself watched by the inhuman Stockmar.

All England was interested in the education of the heir to the throne. *Punch* had made facetious comments on the schemes, and other editors had written a little anxiously of the strict control under which the boy was living. Perhaps Birch also saw the evil in the plan he was appointed to carry out. The Prince's loneliness and fear of his parents found its outlet. He came to love Birch with some of the tenderness he would have given to his father, had he been encouraged. He wrote affectionate notes to his tutor and, creeping into Birch's bedroom at night, he put them on his pillow. One does not know if Albert saw danger in such emotions. He thought it all "unsuitable," so he dismissed Birch and brought in a new man to take charge of his son's education. This was Frederick Waymouth Gibbs, described by Sir Sidney Lee as "prim and correct." Gibbs was an ideal minister of Coburg educational ideas, but his methods estranged the boy still further from his parents. Gibbs was a teller of tales. His sense of duty was rigid and he believed in rules rather than affection as the basis of education. The boy's harmless tempers and misdemeanours were always reported to his father. One of the penalties of royal persons is that they must leave the education of their children to strangers. A woman like Lady Lyttelton or a man like Birch might have drawn parent and child together by revealing the virtues of one to the other. The pattern of Gibbs's nature made it impossible for him to understand this, and he became a barrier instead of a bridge, between father and son.

In his loneliness, the young Prince seemed unable to learn. His essays were not *sober*. He saw a liveliness in history and a human interest in all about him which did not help him to become the encyclopædia Albert wished him to be. He knew nobody of his own age. Somebody complained of this to Albert and pointed out the dangers of such isolation. So the Prince invited carefully chosen

boys from Eton to come to the Castle to tea on Sunday afternoon; but he stayed in the room while the boys talked to his son.

The nature of the struggle between master and pupil is illustrated in an incident which happened a few years afterwards. The Great Exhibition was open and Prince Albert Edward had been to see the wonders of the Crystal Palace. He was delighted by some waxwork models of the murderous thugs of India. He was obliged to write letters to the dour Baron, so he told Stockmar of his excitement over these models. Stockmar felt that he was obliged to censor such naïve enthusiasm. He reminded the boy that he was "born in a Christian and enlightened age in which such atrocious acts are not even dreamt of."

The year 1849 had opened with Louis Napoleon's attempt to bring peace to France. The Queen was relieved to hear that he was "full of courage and energy" and behaving "extremely well." But the ladies of the Court were indignant, because he dared to call himself *His Majesty*, "bringing contempt on the name." The Pope was still a fugitive from Rome. Austria soon regained its power in Northern Italy, Sicily subsided into peace—Prussia and Austria continued their painful enormities in the name of emancipation. But nearer to Great Britain's heart was India. In March the Punjab was added to the Empire, and the dejected Maharajah had to submit to the thought of his Koh-i-noor diamond blazing in the hand of the Queen.

Benjamin Disraeli had become leader of the Opposition. His humour and his drama were bringing a new zest to the affairs of Parliament. He scattered the blossoms of his imagination upon the matter-of-fact heads of his colleagues. "Look at the state of France, look at the state of the whole centre of Europe," he said. ". . . I find in France a Republic without Republicans and in Germany an Empire without an Emperor; and this is progress!!" Then he talked of "the saturnalia of diplomacy" mixing "with the orgies of politics."

Lord Palmerston had just brought the last ounce of the Royal displeasure upon his shoulders for selling arms to the Sicilian insurgents, without consulting the Cabinet. Albert wrote to his brother in May: "Here all is going on well." But he added: ". . . our

ultra Tories would like to bring about a democratic crisis. Because I work energetically against their plans, they abuse me as much as they can."

Their tables side by side, the Queen and the Prince worked diligently together. A faint playfulness was lightening their burdens now. When he went to Grimsby, Albert sent her a fooling letter, telling her that he was "still alive," that when he came home, covered with snow, there were "icicles on his nose," and that: "Last, not least (in the dinner-speech's phrase)," he loved his wife and remained "her devoted husband."

The Queen was obedient to Albert's schemes. He had shown her that a Queen must stand before the public, with orb and sceptre held so that they would strike awe in all beholders. But he had also taught her, through his own tender example, that when the robes and the symbols were put away, she must be humble. It would have been impossible for her to learn this through her intellect, but she had learned it through her heart. She had put on her crown to tell Grey that there were not to be "two fountains of Honour in the realm," when the East India Company wished to bestow medals upon her soldiers. But when she sat beside Albert, watching him work upon his plans, she asked no more of the world than that she should be allowed to obey him. She wrote to Uncle Leopold of her eternal thankfulness. The Creator could not have sent into this troubled world ". . . . a purer, more perfect being . . . . I feel that I could not exist without him. . . ."

While the Queen obeyed, Albert worked. There seemed to be no fault in this lonely, industrious man who, in his thirtieth year, had lost the first, keen beauty of his youth. He had grown fat at his desk and the lissom ease had gone from his walk.

But if youth had faded—if Galahad had grown heavy and more pedestrian in his stride, a new beauty had come to illuminate his form. His character, his purity and his unselfishness were stamped upon his face. People who saw him at that time, wrote of the "dear virtue" in his eyes, the persive, but wholly unselfish smile he gave to all who required something of him. "He had a staid, earnest, thoughtful look when he was in a grave mood; but when he smiled . . . . his whole countenance was irradiated with pleasure; and there was a pleasant sound and heartiness about his laugh." Now that he

was older, "marks of thought, of care, of studiousness were there; but they were accompanied by signs of a soul at peace with itself, and which was troubled chiefly by its love for others. . . ." He lived above the temptations of common men—he had compassion for the sinner, but no comprehension of the sin.

On the way to Scotland, in August, the Queen and the Prince went to Ireland with their children. In 1846, the Queen had written to Lord John Russell, admitting that Ireland represented "a journey which must one day or other be undertaken," but she had added that it was "not a journey of pleasure, like the Queen's former ones," and she had asked that the expenses of it should not fall upon the Civil List.

Lord Clarendon had urged the cause of Ireland early in 1849, by assuring Lord John Russell that the country was quiet again. "Agitation is extinct, Repeal is forgotten—the seditious associations are closed—the priests are frightened and the people are tranquil." When the Irish people saw the Royal children at Kingstown, they shouted with joy. "Oh! Queen, deat!" screamed a fat old woman, "make one of them Prince Patrick, and all Ireland will die for you." Four thousand people walked past the Queen and the Prince at the Levée at Dublin; six thousand troops marched past them at the review in Phoenix Park. Albert spoke to the farmers of the promise of their fields, of their lamentable sufferings, and of their patience. He wrote to Stockmar: "Our Irish tour has gone off well beyond all expectation." To Ernest he wrote that the Irish reception was "a most important proof that the only place in our Kingdom which was considered foul (at least as regards loyalty) is as healthy as all the other parts."

Nevertheless they were delighted to come home to Balmoral after "the brilliant bustle of Ireland." "It seems like a dream," wrote the Queen, "to be here in our dear Highland home again."

## *Chapter Nineteen*

1849-1851

In July of 1849, Prince Albert invited some members of the Society of Arts to Buckingham Palace. He had a new and exciting scheme to put before them. In the few quiet hours which he had been able to wedge in between his duties, he had sketched the plans of a palace: a glittering colossus in which there was to be an exhibition of human attainment.

Prince Albert was tired of the wrangle of Europe. "I don't like to write to Germany any more," he complained to his brother. "The behaviour of the governments is such that I feel ashamed. . . . It is too much and therefore I turn away in disgust." He wished to exalt industrial and domestic qualities: to show that emancipation would come through the plough and the lathe rather than by the sword.

The Prince tested the zeal of the manufacturers. He told them that England might have to give away a few of her secrets in such a display of talents, but that the profit of the individual must be sacrificed for the good of the world. They swallowed this unusual pill without murmur and many pledged themselves to support him. Then he looked across the Channel and drew many of the countries of Europe into his enthusiasm. He worked silently and begged his supporters not to praise him before the manufacturers. It looked, he said, as if he were "to be advertised and used as a means of drawing a full house."

Prince Albert was sensible of Britain's unique position in the world. He realised that her geographical isolation kept her remote from many of the storms on the other side of the Channel. Politically, she was insulated from racial mixings and frontier jealousies: free of the theoretical obsessions of Germany, the selfishness of France and the emotional dangers of the Latin South. This had been proved during the upheavals of 1847-48. Prince Albert said that England's "mission, duty and interest" was to put herself "at the head of the diffusion of civilisation and the attainment of liberty." He pleaded to the supporters who came about him that the Exhibition should be a step towards "the unity of mankind."

Three deaths interrupted the schemes for the Great Exhibition.

Queen Adelaide died in December 1849, recalling for Queen Victoria a fleeting picture of her uncle William and the tradition from which the new Court had recovered. But she also recalled her uncle's goodness to herself, and she wrote tenderly of the Dowager Queen: of her motherly kindness since the time of the King's death and of her last pathetic wish, that her coffin should be carried by sailors. A "touching tribute to her husband's memory," Victoria wrote, for he had been Britain's Sailor King.

The death which devastated the Prince was that of George Anson, his friend and his secretary. They were always together so that there are no letters or records in which one may search for proof of the affection which had grown up between them. But the Queen's letters show how Anson's quiet sense and unprejudiced conduct had brought him near to the Prince's heart. It might be said that Peel and Anson were the Prince's two great friends in England. At the time of Anson's death, Lady Lyttelton wrote of the Prince walking about the palace, "sad and pale and grave." Anson had worked beside him since the day when he came from Coburg, shy and unprepared. The Prince was in despair, and he appealed to Stockmar to come to him.

The weight of Prince Albert's troubles increased. Politicians and newspapers made a sudden stand against him and sneered at his scheme for the Exhibition. Extremists in the Church thought his plan arrogant and deserving of wrath from heaven. Citizens foresaw riots and villainy because of the possible influx of foreigners and doctors threatened plagues. *The Times* supported a band of politicians in abusing Albert for selecting Hyde Park as the site for his palace. "Now our Exhibition is to be driven from London," Albert wrote to Ernest, ". . . the patronisers who are afraid, the radicals who want to show their power over the Crown Property (the Parks), and *The Times*, whose solicitor bought a house near to Hyde Park, are abusing and insulting." The night upon which the letter was written was to decide the question of the site, so Albert added: ". . . We shall probably be defeated and have to give up the whole Exhibition. You see that we do not lie on a bed of roses."

Late in June, a demented ex-officer named Pate attacked the Queen with a heavy cane. She had just left Cambridge House when the man rushed forward and struck her across the face. She ent

perfectly still. The Prince wrote to his brother of their unhappiness. The Queen's head was "green and brown" from the blow. One sorrow followed at the heels of another until July, when the Prince's cup was filled by the death of Peel. He wrote to the Duchess of Kent, who was abroad. ". . . . blow after blow has fallen upon us. . . . And now death has snatched from us Peel, the best of men, our truest friend, the strongest bulwark of the Throne, the greatest statesman of his time! You know the whole extent of our loss."

The Prince was sustaining more than he could bear and the Queen watched him anxiously. The public outcry against the Exhibition joined with his bereavement to weaken Albert's resistance. All his letters and all his plans show that his motives were irreproachable; but again England would not believe in his rectitude. Something of the old despair seemed to possess him: the despair which he had admitted when he was leaving his brother, to face the English adventure alone. The Queen wrote to Stockmar: "Pray, do listen to our entreaties to come. . . . Since the night of your poor friend's death he again wakes so early, and this is a sad distress to me. Clark admits that it is the mind. . . . Diet has been of no avail."

Prince Albert rallied from his weakness. He wrote once to his brother of Peel, of the loss to Europe and to England and the "irreparable" loss to the Crown and to himself. Then he returned to the plans for his Exhibition with sad but grim intention. The exhibits were to be valued at two million pounds, and sixty thousand foreigners were to come from all the lands of the world to see his wonder. Joseph Paxton was already designing the glass palace for him—nothing would daunt him now. The Hyde Park site was assured, the machines of every country were making rare and wonderful exhibits—the packing cases were already arriving at the ports.

Palmerston was the next dissident to draw Albert away from the mountain of papers, the plans of the Exhibition, the lists, and the schemes for policing London. He had enraged the Queen by his persistent neglect. She would not allow a dispatch to leave the country without her sanction, but he ignored her instructions again and again. On this occasion, it was Albert who wrote the letter to

Lord John Russell complaining of Palmerston's disobedience, "not from oversight, or negligence, but upon principle."

When Palmerston was obliged to make his explanations, it was to Prince Albert that he came, "much agitated . . . with tears in his eyes." The Prince had been used to a "bland smile" upon Palmerston's face. Now the Minister came to him in contrition, and the tears caused Albert to be more tender with him.

The Prince's memorandum of the conversation will always stand as perhaps the finest proof of his sense of justice and ability to build up a conversation gently, thinking always of the main purpose and never of self-justification. Next day he spoke to Lord John Russell of the interview and told him "how low and agitated" Palmerston was, "almost to make me pity him." Lord John said "that he thought what had passed had done a great deal of good."

The year moved on. Louis Philippe died at Claremont and the Prince went to the bereaved family. The Queen was "the picture of a shipwreck, left alone on a lonely island, getting thinner and thinner from all the misery in her country." They were "all more or less suffering." Then came the death of the Queen of the Belgians, leaving Leopold once more "alone and desolate in the world." There was no peace for Albert, until the Court went to Balmoral. Here he smiled again. He could spread his plans upon a table and look out upon a Scottish landscape. He loved the people here, "primitive, true-hearted and without guile." When the Forbes of Strathdon passed by and saw the turrets of Balmoral, he took off one of his shoes and filled it with whisky. Standing beside the Dee, Forbes and his fifty men drank the Queen's health from the shoe before they passed on.

On the way back to London Albert paused in York to speak in praise of Sir Robert Peel. His address was deep in thought and tender in appreciation. The immediate reward was a storm of praise. But again the old and mean suspicions crept in. Did the Prince write his own speeches? They "were said to be too good for a Prince."

This time, *The Spectator* came forward in Albert's defence. "He has never made a speech in public, on any occasion of mark, without suggesting matter for useful thought . . . there is an individuality about them which stamps their real authorship. . . . If he

were removed from us, we should miss one of the least obtrusive, but most useful of our public men."

When the new year opened, the glittering palace was already rising above the calm green spaces of Hyde Park. It was one thousand feet long, and the transept rose one hundred feet towards the sky. Workmen were painting the iron framework cobalt blue and, between the pillars, there were to be rich scarlet hangings. Wonder of wonders was "a great elm-tree, in full foliage," stretching out its branches over white statuary, fountains, and packing cases. "The goods for the Exhibition are being brought into the building," Albert wrote to his brother. He thought it "a real work of marvellous art." But he was "more dead than alive." His opponents worked "with might and main, to throw all the old women into a panic," and to drive him crazy. Colonel Sibthorp had risen in the House and "prayed that hail or lightning might descend from heaven" to defeat Albert's plans for the Exhibition.

On the first of May the Great Exhibition was opened. It was a "complete and beautiful triumph." Albert led the Queen into the Crystal Palace, past the great iron gates, the palms, the statues, and the beautiful crystal fountain. They held the hands of their two elder children. The Queen was in an ecstasy. "God bless my dearest Albert, God bless my dearest country," she wrote afterwards. Six million people were to stare in astonishment at the wonder he had made. When the Queen and the Prince had opened the Exhibition, they walked about to see the most astounding miscellany ever displayed in one place. The world had made obeisance before the Prince and the Queen. A Chinese citizen had detached himself from the multitude and had bowed low before Victoria. A German and a Frenchman argued in the crowd about English loyalty. "It is a principle," said the German. "No, it is a passion," insisted the Frenchman, and while the organ played and the trumpets blared, he took out his notebook and wrote: "In England loyalty is a passion."

Day after day, the Queen went with Prince Albert to the Crystal Palace. There were eleven miles of tables and fifteen thousand exhibitors. The Rajah of Travancore had sent an ivory throne; there were bedsteads in zebra wood, with figures in panels. There was a riot of terra-cotta and majolica, lacquer work from Lahore,

jewelled weapons from Madrid, Swiss cabinets with orgies of carving upon them, vases from Stoke-on-Trent, church plate from Coventry, produce and pretty devices from the Colonies. And there was "a submarine boat . . . . the shape of a broad-backed carp." The Queen was "quite beaten" and her head "bewildered from the myriads of beautiful and wonderful things. . . ."

"Albert's name is immortalised," she wrote. Alabaster goddesses rose from marble shells in which water bubbled in many colours. An American organ, crowned by a colossal eagle, spilled all kinds of music upon the heads of the people; the great elm tree moved gently in the cool, fresh wind which came in from the park. There were thousands of objects of beauty: fire-screens, grates and fenders, ornamented and lavish: stands for palms, bowls of mother-of-pearl set in ormolu, clocks set in tangles of metal design, cupids rising from leaves, birds trembling upon twigs stiff and brassy, chandeliers of crystal, carpets and cushions worked with minute patterns and many colours.

British industry was flourishing and Victorian decoration was born. The wives of the country would put all their ugly old English furniture up into the garrets. There were to be beds with Indian fretwork panels in the great houses of England, tables were to be gay with stiff and jolly imitation flowers, walls were to be lively with floral sprays and birds. But most important of all, the world was coming to London to see an exhibition of the products of peaceful occupation and enlightened husbandry. Here were no clamorous statesmen, no dishonest princes nor abdicating kings. This was Albert's lesson to the world—that swords should be beaten into ploughshares. "All is owing to Albert—All to him," wrote the Queen. And it was true.

Prince Albert was economical. More than this, he never touched any business concern without improving it. But the Queen was a spendthrift and she had the Hanoverian love for seeing money depart as freely as it came. "She is naturally inclined to be generous but the Prince is fond of money," wrote Greville.

Albert had already saved two hundred thousand pounds of the Queen's income to pay for Osborne House. Up to the time of his coming to England the management of the Duchy of Cornwall had been mildly scandalous. George the Fourth had squeezed the

golden goose of the Duchy so cruelly that he was obliged to sign over the estates to Messrs. Coutts.

As the heir to the throne was a minor, Prince Albert had become chief guardian of the Duchy's affairs. In March of 1847, Albert had done this work so well that the Duchy estates were producing seventy thousand pounds a year; a fit enough fortune for the Prince of Wales, when he came of age.

Albert's control of affairs in the Court was now complete. There was no question as to who ruled the family fortunes. "She acts in everything by his inspiration and never writes a letter that he does not dictate every word of," wrote Greville. "His knowledge and information are astonishing, and there is not a department of the Government regarding all the details and management of which he is not much better informed and more capable than the Minister at the head of it."

The Prince showed the same meticulous care, the same business acumen, and, added to these, astonishing foresight, in managing the finances of the 1851 Exhibition. When it closed in the autumn, there was a profit of £186,000 to be disposed of.

Prince Albert swept all the Exhibition papers away from his table and began a new plan. Another fresh sheet of paper was drawn in front of him—together with a map of Kensington.

In Kensington Gore, there were about thirty acres of land, to be bought for £50,000. The Prince imagined the thirty acres of land covered by great buildings which were to be shrines for Science and Art. Here, in the midst of growing London, there was to be a centre for education and knowledge, unequalled in the world. For hundreds of years, thousands of students would come here, to be equipped and improved. His Crystal Palace was to be the financial father of the biggest educational scheme attempted in his time.

A whole book might be written upon the achievements of the 1851 Exhibition Commissioners. Working near to the lines laid down by the Prince, they have probably done more for education than any individual benefactor, including Rhodes.

"I have.... made up my mind to retreat into my shell as quickly as possible," Albert wrote to Stockmar, when the Exhibition closed in the autumn, ". . . but I am not free to choose as regards the considerable surplus with which we shall wind up. For its application

I have devised a plan. . . ." Then he proceeded to tell him of the land in Kensington Gore and of the grand buildings. His plan was followed, almost to the letter.

About eighty years after the closing of the Exhibition, *The Times* reviewed the brilliant success of the Commissioners who had fulfilled Albert's plans. "Sneers at the Prince Consort are as far behind the times as the faded jokes about aspidistras and antimacassars. . . . The sterling qualities of the man make his fame secure." Thus the leader writer expressed the newspaper's view of the Prince's memory. "He was patient and courteous under an intolerable deal of snubbing and misprision. For all his uninviting sense of duty he was no dullard. He had a clear, sensible mind and worked hard with it."

The same issue of *The Times* contained a review of the work done with the income of the Exhibition profits. It is little short of prodigious. The grand museums and galleries are the serene proof of the Prince's foresight. The educational institutions open up the way to success for hundreds of students, year after year. In the present day, two hundred science scholars working in responsible advisory and administrative posts in industry and public service, and three hundred principals and professors and lecturers in universities and colleges have made their way to success through the scholarships granted from the funds of the Exhibition Commissioners. Such are the educational influences that have sprung from the Prince's wisdom.

## *Chapter Twenty*

1851-1853

By this time, Prince Albert was "King to all intents and purposes." Greville made this assertion and added that while the Queen had "the title, he is really discharging the functions of the Sovereign." There grew in him a love for managing the affairs and lives of other people. There was seldom a political tornado in Europe which did not inspire him to write a long memorandum, sane, cold and faintly dictatorial. His sense of right saved his judgments from becoming dangerous, but he developed a desire to lay down moral and civil laws for the government of the entire world.

The Office of Minister for Foreign Affairs would have delighted him. What did not delight him was the way that Palmerston filled that office. Late in October, Palmerston aroused the Court and his colleagues to splendid indignation. Kossuth, the emancipator of Hungary, had arrived in England. In fine Elizabethan English, learned from his Shakespeare, he was spilling trouble wherever he went, denouncing the Emperors of Russia and Austria. To all intents and purposes, England was on friendly terms with these two monarchs, yet Palmerston expressed his willingness to receive Kossuth. Lord John Russell was obliged to call a meeting of the Cabinet Council and he almost forbade Palmerston to see Kossuth. Palmerston still sponsored the Hungarian cause and he received addresses from Kossuth's supporters, in his rooms in Downing Street—addresses in which the Emperors of Russia and Austria were referred to as "odious and detestable assassins."

The Queen was "vastly displeased" and Greville vowed that this was "the worst thing" Palmerston had ever done.

On December 4th, news of the *coup d'état* in Paris reached Osborne. The Prince and the Queen prepared a letter. The British Ambassador in Paris must be told in all haste to remain impartial and "take no part whatever in what is passing." The letter went to the Minister through Lord John Russell. In spite of the Royal precaution, Palmerston had communicated indirectly with the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, expressing his entire approbation of the act of the President. Here was the final impertinence

from a man with whom the Queen and Prince Albert had nothing in common, in thought or in manner.

The Prince thought that England would be saved only if the "immoral one for foreign affairs" could be exposed and dismissed into ignominious retirement. There was a third person whose attitude was interesting in this moral struggle between Palmerston and the Crown. In the early days, Lord John Russell had been openly rude to the Queen and the Prince. Once when they asked him for "his opinion and advice on some matter . . . he sent no answer at all." But the Exhibition had helped him to realise Albert's talents. He wrote to the Queen then and said that he thought the Prince's character "very extraordinary for abilities, judgment, information, and a sympathy for all the sorrows and joys of his fellow-creatures."

Now that Prince Albert had enlisted Lord John's appreciation, he had a lieutenant in his war on Palmerston. When the shocking news of his behaviour over the *coup d'état* came to the Queen and Prince Albert, they remembered the long and sinister list of Palmerston's crimes. Lord John was forced to act in December when Palmerston substantiated his verbal approval of the President's action with an official dispatch to the British Ambassador in Paris. Lord John wrote to Palmerston that he was "reluctantly compelled to come to the conclusion that the conduct of foreign affairs can no longer be left in your hands with advantage to the country."

Palmerston gave up his seals. Lord Granville was appointed in his stead and the Queen and Albert sighed and then smiled. Lady Palmerston wrote that Albert could now manage the Foreign Office with "pliable Granville" in the place of her husband. Prince Albert wrote very little. He was equally expressionless in dealing with success and failure. But, in January, he admitted to his brother that he was overwhelmed in "preparing the campaigns we must still have with Palmerston, that we get the better of him and that he disappear forever from our foreign office."

Greville wrote: "*Palmerston is out. . . I nearly dropped off my chair.*" The Queen wrote an excited letter to King Leopold. Palmerston had "done with the Foreign Office for ever." She joined with Albert in being heartily amused because the newspapers referred to Palmerston as "the veteran statesman." Seeing him

safely expelled, she was able to join her husband and the children in spending what she described as "a very happy Christmas."

Prince Albert was never wholly pleased by the way in which British people fostered friendship with France. In 1852, British statesmen realised that the new Emperor might have the same greedy desire for territory which had sent the first Napoleon marauding over the face of Europe. Albert had never wavered in his feelings for the French. Now, with public opinion to support him, he threw all his energies into the defence of the country.

In February, Albert turned his attention to the Army. Under Louis Napoleon, France was a nerve-racking neighbour, and it was doubtful if, in a moment of emergency, England could mass her forces and intimidate prospective invaders. "Albert grows daily fonder and fonder of politics and business," wrote the Queen to King Leopold, adding that she grew "daily to dislike them more and more." Her duties as a wife and mother were sufficient for her now. Almost every two years she had borne a baby. The schoolroom was full of children and full of problems. She gave Albert the public arena, unreservedly, and then she made an astonishing admission to her uncle: "We women are not made for governing."

The fear of France made Albert search the records of the country's defences and he was appalled by what he found. He wrote to Lord John Russell: "This is the third time during the Queen's reign that an apprehension of war and consequent panic about invasion have seized the public mind of this country." He urged the Prime Minister to send him statements "showing the whole of our means at present available, both naval and military." He had put a match to a lively rocket.

Within the next few months, Russell's Ministry fell. Palmerston won the day in the House, over the debate upon the proposed militia, and a new Ministry was formed under Lord Stanley, then became Lord Derby: "a very sorry Cabinet," which did not include Palmerston. There was an energetic shuffling of the honours, and Disraeli became Chancellor of the Exchequer. Albert wrote a dejected letter to his brother. "Here an unable ministry is dragging on its existence and it is giving up the principle that gave it its life — 'Protection.' . . . The opposition is totally disorganised. Lord John Russell has lost all power over his party. Lord Palmerston is

independent and will probably go with the Protectionists. The Peelites have separated because Sir James Graham turned considerably to the left and Mr. Gladstone pursues bigotry. Lord Derby has podagra and next week we shall probably break up." Yet he thought the "prosperity in the country unusually great." Especially the lower classes were "very well off."

The Prince and the Queen walked in the garden at Osborne together: they planned amusements for the children and in the evening, when all was still, they sat upon a sofa and read the *Mémoirs de St. Simon* aloud. Or they would move across the room and, with Albert sitting at the pianoforte, they would sing. Victoria's voice would waken the hushed room, and then Albert would join with her:

*The husband's heart is bowed unto the dust,  
But still the wife looks up with fearless trust,  
To heaven's pure light, up to the stars beyond,  
And a tear falls, that says, "Do not despont."*

Power was a very small compensation for the long drudgery of affairs. It did not sustain them when they were thus alone, so curiously estranged in feeling and sensibility from those about them. Their courtiers were English, their life was grand; at heart they were sentimental and homely, with a passionate desire to be the *Hausherr* and *Hausfrau*, seated beside their fire. Albert had no friends. Year after year he dreamed of Rosenau: he wrote of the trees, the scents he remembered, the gardens and the little castles. He pressed dead blossoms in his Prayer Book. "Sentimentality is a plant that cannot grow in England," he wrote to his brother. ". . . an Englishman, when he finds that he is being sentimental, becomes frightened as at the thought of having a dangerous illness, and he shoots himself." Then he added: "I think the plant is smothered by reading so many newspapers."

"I can hardly believe that in five years I may have a married daughter," Albert wrote to Ernest, in September. His thirty-third birthday had just passed, with letters from Coburg, pictures and gifts. "Our birthdays are beginning to make us rather old. I wonder if you have the same feeling. Perhaps it arises in me from seeing Youth growing up around me. . . . Prosperity is very great

here, the bank has twenty-four million pounds sterling in gold and silver in the cellars."

In September the Duke of Wellington died. The Queen and the Prince were deeply unhappy. He had always been a safe rock in their turbulent sea, living a life "cloudless to the very end; glorious, great, unstained." "The whole world has suffered a loss," wrote Albert, "we especially have lost a good friend."

Then, as if the cloak of the great soldier were already falling upon his own shoulders, Albert talked of armaments and war, and he accepted some of the offices which had been filled by the Duke. "We are cleaning our old rusty cannons," he wrote to Ernest. "We are building fortifications, we have 80,000 men ready and we are improving our weapons. As regards the latter I shall be much obliged if you could procure me a Prussian needle gun. I should think you could easily get one from Erfurt and send it to me direct."

The Prince was moving on to the greatest trial of his life and his anxieties for Britain's defence were to lead to a cruel misjudgment of his motives. He had one staunch ally in his desire for defences. Benjamin Disraeli, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, had at last come near to his sovereign. His clever letters were shining occasions in the daily life of the Court. One day he apologised for having written "a somewhat crude note," but he was certain that the Queen would prefer "a genuine report" to "a more artificial and prepared statement." She had begun by disliking the Jew, but now she was receiving his letters "with satisfaction," especially when they told her that he was ready to "provide efficiently for the defence of the country." It was supporting a scheme which had become Albert's passion.

In the new year there was a change in the Ministry. "One almost fancies oneself in a lunatic asylum," Albert wrote to Stockmar. Lord Derby was obliged to retire. Lord Aberdeen had succeeded in obtaining a union between the Peelites and, under him, the new Government, including the hated Palmerston, came into power. Albert wrote again to his brother that the new Ministry was one of "extraordinary talent, discipline and perseverance." "Even Palmerston belongs to it," he continued, "and if he is in a department in which he has to work like a horse, he cannot do any

mischief." Two months after he wrote: "Our Ministry is doing very well and it gains the confidence of the country continually. We are continuing our fortifications in the ports, as well as increasing and drilling our militia. This year we shall have 85,000 men. All this guarantees peace. . . . The most threatening place in Europe is at present Turkey."

England drifted towards the Crimean War and Prince Albert went on with his preparations. He conceived the idea of a permanent training camp; and Aldershot grew from his plans. In June, troops marched into the camp at Chobham and "established themselves in a line of tents extending over upwards of two miles." The Prince drove down, slept in a tent to take part in the manœuvres, and came back to London with a severe cold. The Queen went to Chobham and, as she watched "Our dear camp," she broke into new superlatives over Albert's achievements. She wrote to the King of the Belgians: "When I think that this camp, and all our large fleet, are without doubt the result of Albert's assiduous and unceasing representations to the late and present Government, without which I fully believe very little would have been done, one may be proud and thankful; but, as usual, he is so modest, that he allows no praise."

The word *war* was whispered in the streets and the preparations spread. They reached their greatest glory at Spithead. "The finest fleet perhaps which England ever fitted out," Prince Albert wrote to Stockmar. "Forty ships of war of all kinds, all moved by steam-power but three," were assembled at Spithead. One hundred steamboats with spectators were expected. Afterwards he wrote: "The great naval review has come off. . . . the *Duke of Wellington* with 131 guns. . . . went, without sails, and propelled only by the screw, *eleven miles an hour*." The wonder called for *italics*. ". . . I must rejoice to see that achieved which I had struggled so long and hard to effect. . . . I still suffer a good deal from rheumatism in the right shoulder, which makes even writing difficult."

## *Chapter Twenty-one*

1853-1855

In December of 1853, Lord Palmerston resigned from the Ministry. Through some fantastic trick of imagination, the newspapers blamed Prince Albert, and he was subjected to a new storm of public abuse. Palmerston had resigned because he was tired of the apathetic view of the Eastern question adopted by other members of the Ministry. This was his private reason, but he declared in public that he disagreed with Lord John Russell's Reform Bill. He came back into office, early in the new year, but in the interim, the Prince was accused of secret meddling in international affairs. There were many people who argued that, being a German, he was the friend of Russia: that being a Coburg, he was working for the aggrandisement of his family, against England. There was a chorus being sung in the streets:

*We'll send him home and make him groan,  
Oh All you've played the deuce then;  
The German lad has acted sad  
And turned tail with the Russians.*

Prince Albert wrote to Stockmar, "There is no kind of treason to the country of which I have not been guilty. All this must be born tranquilly." The Queen revealed her anger in a letter to Princess Augusta of Prussia on January 13th. "For the past three weeks there have been vile attacks in the newspapers against my dear husband, who is accused of intriguing in the interests of Russia! They are quite mad. . . . You will readily understand how enraged and indignant I feel about it. . . ." The malicious scandal grew until it was said that Prince Albert was a traitor to the Queen, that he had been impeached for high treason, arrested and committed to the Tower. The rumour drew the crowds of London towards the river and they waited in thousands, pressing against the Tower walls, to see the Queen and the Prince brought in as prisoners.

While he was being accused of working for Russia's cause, Albert was writing thus to his brother: ". . . The naked position is this; we and France are determined not to allow Russia to force Turkey

into concessions which we consider unjust nor to allow Russia to destroy and conquer Turkey."

At last the Prince forsook his habitual calm and became angry. He wrote a long letter to Stockmar, complaining of the "mad-house" in which he was obliged to live. Ever since he came to England, praise and pence had been given to him grudgingly. Now he wrote, recalling the past, "Peel cut down my income, Wellington refused me my rank, the Royal Family cried against the foreign intruder, the Whigs in office were only inclined to concede to me just as much space as I could stand upon."

Even Greville was angered by the attacks on Albert. He thought the "abomination" was "got up, managed, and paid for by Louis Napoleon, Walewski, and Palmerston." He believed that Palmerston, goaded by the Court dislike for him, would be "capable of anything," and that he was "excessively reckless, daring, and vindictive."

Parliament met at the end of January and Albert's innocence was proved. Lord Derby spoke in the Upper House and Walpole vindicated him in the Commons. His position was at last made clear and he was able to write to Ernest, "my political status and activity, which up to this time have been accepted in silence, have now been declared in Parliament and vindicated without a dissentient voice."

Albert had been unhappy but sensible over the abuse heaped upon him. He saw that the calumnies would "purge away impurities," and this they did, for public stupidity had forced the Ministers to declare his position in definite terms. "I may say with pride, that not the veriest tittle of a reproach can be brought against me *with truth*," he wrote. He had the satisfaction of a new and complete understanding, following the attacks of public and Press. The Queen was able to write to Princess Augusta, "the shameful and infuriating slanders against my good and beloved husband have been triumphantly refuted." Disraeli also declared his admiration of the Prince. "The opportunity which office has afforded me of becoming acquainted with the Prince fills me with a sentiment towards him which I may describe without exaggeration as one of affection," he wrote in a letter to a friend.

Prince Albert had to wait still longer for Palmerston to admit his

talents. There came a day when he spoke of Albert as a man "far greater and more extraordinary" than the Emperor of the French. But it was not until he became Prime Minister that he made this acknowledgment. Until then, he "had no idea of his possessing such eminent qualities," or of "how fortunate" it was "for the country that the Queen married such a Prince."

Palmerston came back into office. The threat of war, the complications with Russia and France and Turkey were too frightening now to admit nursing of the conflicts within the country.

Albert worked on, shocked by the state of Europe, and watching the Crimean War come nearer and nearer. He did not allow his German blood to disturb his sense of justice and disgust over Prussia's unwillingness to support England against Russia. "I don't like to write about Germany," he said in a letter to his brother. ". . . involuntarily I make a fist and this prevents me from writing."

"For Germany . . . there can be no better combination in this heavy crisis than a close alliance between France and us. Prussia's behaviour is wrong. Neutrality is absurd. . . . Saying Prussia is not interested in the question is stupid. Prussia is much more interested in the question than France or England. For Germany it is a question of life, whereas for us, only a secondary nature. . . . Our preparations for the war are progressing twice as fast as the French. The fleet will be exceedingly fine, perhaps a little too strong for the shallow sea. The 25,000 men for Constantinople are organised, 10,000 of them have already arrived at Malta, the artillery has left and the cavalry is to go through France, and, at the wish of the Emperor, to march through Paris! Who would have thought a year ago that such things might happen!"

This letter was written on March 23rd. In April, the dreaded day came. On the third, Prince Albert wrote once more to his brother, "I hope you found our declaration of war dignified. We are very benevolent towards the neutrals in our declarations." The Queen used similar words in sending a copy of the declaration to Princess Augusta. She wrote, "It is very dignified," and added, as a reprimand for Prussia's tardiness, "We had hoped to proceed hand in hand."

The Emperor of Russia had apparently threatened to publish

Albert's letters to him, but the Prince was not afraid. "My correspondence with him refers only to the announcements of the births of our children, so they would be as uninteresting as they are innocent." To Stockmar he wrote: "Our finances are so flourishing, that we expect to carry on the war without borrowing a shilling, doubling the Income Tax in case of need. . . . The public is as eager for war as ever."

Thus the Crimean War began. The streets of London were lively with the marching of soldiers and the sound of trumpets. Above them all stood the Queen, a little flushed by the fear and the glory of ruling a country at war. She went on to the balcony of Buckingham Palace early in the morning to see the Scots Fusiliers march past. The sun was shining over the towers of Westminster Abbey. This was *Her* London and these were *Her* soldiers. In a time like this the people forgot the politicians. In the grip of a great emotion, Londoners always came to the gates of the palace. The soldiers were going to defend *Her* and they went with *Her* picture in their pockets. Prince Albert stood by, less able to express his feelings.

It was not enough that she should bid farewell to her soldiers. She went to the coast to speed her navy on its terrible way. She watched from the deck of her ship until long after the fleet had melted into the distance in which its adventure lay. Albert stood beside her, conscientious, stiff and still, while her white handkerchief waved and waved, until it fell to her side in her trembling hand.

The archives of the Government offices and those of Windsor contain overwhelming proof of the part that Prince Albert played during the Crimean War. The public accusation that he had sympathy for Russia is all the more absurd, and the scene at the Tower the more shameful, when one reads of his confidence that "all Europe" wished to see Russia "defeated and chastised." The Prince wrote a letter to his stepmother, whose sympathies were with the enemy. "I can . . . forgive your heart for being Russian. . . . Mine is exactly the reverse." From the day when the war began, he read every dispatch, he knew "to a man the strength of both forces," he watched every move and he studied the charts of the country; his knowledge was so sound that his reports and suggestions were beyond the criticism of even the oldest

campaigners. He studied the maps of the territory upon which the soldiers were to fight and he drew up plans for the invasion of the Crimea.

Fifty volumes of memoranda grew under Prince Albert's hand. He seemed to rise to even greater heights of efficiency and cold reason, under the strain and excitement of the war. He saw Ministers and Generals make mistake after mistake. "We have much trouble with the Ministry," he wrote to his brother. "Aberdeen still lives in 1814, Lord John in 1830, Palmerston in 1848. Parliament and the Press have suddenly become born generals. . . . The war will not be ended quickly if the Germans do not take part. . . . Could we only take Sebastopol!"

Many names were to be added to the Crimean story before Sebastopol. Alma, Balaclava and Inkermann worked their havoc on the army—the weary months moved on and during the winter the suffering of the troops was terrible. Albert's early warning about their bedraggled strength had been justified, but the warning had been too late. He worked day and night at his desk; suggestion after suggestion was put into calm memoranda and sent to the Ministers and Generals. He tired them with his energy. He urged Aberdeen to form a foreign legion and he pleaded for the completing of the militia by ballot. At first, the Cabinet demurred, but, in the end, all his suggestions were adopted. Just as Aldershot grew out of his idea for a permanent encampment, so his schemes for strengthening and improving the army were to be tried and proved. "The army must be increased," he wrote. The dismal story moved on through mismanagement and sickness, with occasional victories to stimulate the tired zeal of the troops. Despair was threatening. Dying men were raving in the beds of Koulalee, mumbling: "Sebastopol—has it fallen—would that I had been in at the last."

The Emperor of Russia had written: "Sebastopol will never be taken." The Russians were confident, and before this confidence Albert and Palmerston met and at last found themselves concerned in a common desire. Their violent eagerness to strengthen the army and humiliate Russia was drawing them closer together. In February 1855, the sophisticated old statesman whom the Queen had thought too old to be useful and only clever enough to

be dangerous, came to Buckingham Palace to kiss her hand as her Prime Minister. Palmerston was as zealous as Albert in his desire to fight the war magnificently, for none but a terrible and final victory. But there were frightening anxieties almost on the day when he came into power. One of the first things he did was to write a personal letter to Louis Napoleon. This action excited Prince Albert to a memorandum. The letter had caused them "great uneasiness." He thought this "sort of private correspondence" between Palmerston and the Emperor "a novel and unconstitutional practice."

In March, the Emperor Nicholas died. Again the soldiers raised themselves in their beds at Koulalee, to cry "Nicholas is dead. . . . Thank God. . . . All blessings be with you for bringing us such blessed news. . . . If he died by poison we should have peace. . . . He has been the death of thousands."

In September of 1854, Prince Albert had been entrusted with an important mission when he went to Boulogne to confer with Napoleon III. The Queen had dismissed her own anxiety at the parting, remembering the more terrible separations between the mothers and their soldiers at the war. For the Prince, the occasion was too important for sentiment. He had welcomed the opportunity of sharing his ideas with the Emperor, and when he returned to England, he set down his impressions with usual care. He thought Louis Napoleon gayer than he had expected, not so pale or so old. They had driven together along the "detestable" roads, they had talked and they had reviewed thousands of soldiers. Albert thought him "quiet and indolent from constitution, not easily excited, but gay and humorous when at his ease." The Prince added that he considered the Emperor's education "very deficient," even on subjects which were of the "first necessity to him." He had noted also that the Emperor was modest about his deficiencies and willing to admit them.

The friendship between the French and the English peoples, so necessary during the war, received further encouragement in the following year when the Emperor and the Empress visited Queen Victoria at Windsor. The gilded staterooms of the castle were opened for them, and the Emperor enjoyed the bitter pleasure of being a guest in the rooms in which Louis Philippe had stayed

only a few years before. The Queen sat next to him at dinner and she listened to his voice, "low and soft," telling her that he had seen her eighteen years before, a smiling girl, driving through the London streets. She found him civil, amiable and well bred in his manners. They left the Castle after breakfast, to walk in the park. The Queen was contented to listen to the Emperor and Albert, discussing the plans of the war, the anxieties and the hopes. There was a "beautiful and exciting" review of the troops in the Park. The Long Walk was crowded and the Emperor, riding across the field "on a very fiery, beautiful chestnut," joined Albert and rode down the line.

In the evening, the Queen danced in a quadrille with the Emperor, in the Waterloo Chamber. The terrible Napoleon's nephew was now her "nearest and most intimate ally." She thought the Empress "gentle and graceful and modest"—all saintly virtues were discovered in her. One afternoon, Albert walked in the park with the Emperor, and they talked more intimately. When they returned to the Castle, Prince Albert set down the gist of their conversation in a memorandum which was sent off to Lord Palmerston.

In Coburg, Stockmar read about the glorious reception with grim common sense. There was one thing certain, he said. The splendour of England's reception would "for his whole life, prevent [Louis Napoleon] from sinning against England."

The wounded were coming home. Prince Albert worked all day, planning campaigns and stimulating the energy of the Government. The Queen studied schemes for hospitals and nurses and she spent hours in visiting the wounded men. Among them was one she had seen and recognised from the balcony when the Scots Fusiliers went away. She found him lying on his bed, shot through the cheek. She enquired into every plan for the care of the wounded: she was anxious when she saw that the windows in their rooms were so high that when they turned upon their pillows they could not see the English spring. She remonstrated because the sick men at Chatham were forced to eat and sleep in the same room and she could not bear the idea of the soldiers being brought home in hulks. "A hulk is a very gloomy place, and these poor men require their spirits to be cheered," she wrote. She talked of her "dear,

brave, noble heroes," and she asked, "Will the medals now be soon ready?" She wished to present them *personally*, adding, with astuteness which mixed happily with her anxiety, that such an act would no doubt have a beneficial effect on recruiting. She was delighted, after presenting the medals, when she was told that the soldiers refused to give them up to have their names engraved on them "for fear that they should not receive the identical ones put into their hands by me."

## *Chapter Twenty-two*

1855-1856

In August of 1855, Queen Victoria and the Prince went to stay with the Emperor in France. Their journey was brightened by news of the Russian defeat on the Tschernaja and Prince Albert wrote to Stockmar from St. Cloud: ". . . we are all well . . . the Emperor in high spirits . . . the nation flattered and friendly." The carriages passed through the florescent streets of Paris, the people cried "Vive la Reine d'Angleterre," and Victoria bowed and smiled. But a spectator saw that she was still more happy when they cried "Vive le Prince Albert."

The Queen resumed her new friendship. She found that she could be frank with the Emperor, and she begged him to speak out, if he had any complaint, or if he was annoyed, for, ". . . by doing so all misunderstandings and complications would be avoided." This was a new delight to them both. Prince Albert and the Queen were naturally candid and they were not clever at subterfuge. They were happy to sit thus, talking to a man who was their equal, telling him frankly of the defects in his Generals and listening with patience when he spoke "very openly and frankly of the defects" of the British Generals.

Prince Albert's birthday was celebrated at St. Cloud. "May God ever bless and protect him for many, many years to come, and may we ever be together to our lives' end!" Queen Victoria wrote. Among the presents she gave him were some pretty Crimean studs, with a blank upon one of the buttons. She hoped that the name of Sebastopol would be added. The Emperor had composed special music in honour of Albert's birthday, and early on the sunny morning, all three of them stepped out upon a balcony. Three hundred drummers were assembled in the courtyard to play a special roll in Albert's honour. Every barrier between the sovereigns seemed to be broken down. They talked upon topics as dangerous as the relationship between the Orleans family and the Queen. "I should not fear saying anything to him," wrote Victoria, and even Albert, who was "naturally much calmer . . . much less taken by people," admitted that it was extraordinary "how very much attached one becomes to the Emperor." When the Queen came

back to England, she spoke of Louis Napoleon as her *personal friend*.

The Court went to Balmoral for the grand turrets of Prince Albert's new castle were complete. In Scotland the big storms of Europe were not as important as the little storms of the nursery. One day, Leopold was naughty, and the Queen suggested that it might be well to whip him. The Duchess of Kent pleaded for him and said that it made her very sad to hear a child cry. "Not when you have eight, Mama—that wears off," said the Queen. "You could not go through that each time one of the eight cried!"

One of "the eight," Princess Victoria, was growing towards womanhood. She was attractive at fourteen, but, more than this, she had a well-ordered intelligence. The cloak of painstaking learning which Stockmar had given to Prince Albert was handed on to her. As early as 1844, she had proved her composure and royal manner. When she was little more than a baby, she had walked up a staircase in Dundee, with the people cheering all around her, "not put out, nor frightened, nor nervous." And she had stood up at Dunkeld to bow to the people out of the window, without any prompting from her parents.

She had learned everything her father could teach her, with obedience and ease, and more quickly than her elder brother. She would never be found, in later years, bored by the tombs of Egypt and reading *East Lynne* at the foot of a Pyramid. She was serious, faintly precocious, and so intelligent that she was able to help her father at his work; an obedient and pliable secretary, understanding the Prince's conscientious methods.

In the summer of 1855, Princess Victoria was still in her fifteenth year. She had not yet been confirmed. Yet the plan for her marriage to Prince Frederick William of Prussia was almost complete. She had met him for the first time when he came to London for the opening of the Great Exhibition. He came again in September when the Court was at Balmoral. He joined the family in their rides over the moors, and after a few days he begged the Queen and the Prince to allow him to court Princess Victoria. One afternoon, when they were all riding up Craig-na-Ban, the Prince spurred his horse forward in the narrow track until he was riding beside the Princess. They paused and he leaned over to pick her a

sprig of white heather. He placed it in her hand, and on the way home he told her that he loved her.

The first news of the betrothal was sent by Prince Albert to his brother. "The marriage cannot be thought of until she is seventeen," he wrote. "It is to be kept *strictly secret*. Of course, all the world will talk about it, but as long as we ourselves say nothing, it will not matter." Some months afterwards he wrote, "The intended is more and more in love every day. Victoria is quite impatient about it, for she cannot imagine that the child can arouse such feelings. Vicky is very reasonable. She will go well prepared into the labyrinth of Berlin."

Queen Victoria had formed a strong and affectionate friendship with Princess Augusta, the mother of her promised son-in-law. Her first letter to her friend mixed her own pleasure with complaints against the "*infamous Times*," which viewed the betrothal unkindly.

In this letter, written on October 22nd, the Queen discussed her daughter's character with simple frankness. "But she is still half a child and has to develop herself both physically and morally before their marriage takes place in two years' time. . . . Admittedly it is rather long for dear Fritz to wait, but I hope he will often visit us, alone, to see his Vicky." The Queen's letter to William of Prussia showed equal pleasure over the alliance. Her letter to the King of Prussia insisted upon the theme of private happiness. "Although I can fully appreciate the great value and the political significance of this proposed union, my chief thought is the knowledge that our beloved child will go through life's difficult journey, secure and happy in the companionship of such an honest and noble young man, in whom I have the greatest trust."

The Queen's private pleasure over her daughter's betrothal was enhanced by public joy over the fall of Sebastopol in September. They were still at Balmoral. Out on the hill a wood pile had been waiting for a year—for the great day on which Prince Albert was to light it and send the good news of Sebastopol over the countryside. The Queen watched the blaze from the house. She could see the Prince outlined against the flames, and the scattered population from the valley dancing about him. For a moment, Albert dismissed anxiety; he joined the excited Scotsmen and danced, "a veritable Witch's dance, supported by whisky."

The Russians still clung tenaciously to the north side of Sebastopol and they were able to hold the allies back. There was no cooling of England's eagerness to pursue the war and the dockyards and arsenals of the country were still strengthening the fleet. But there was public dissatisfaction with the apparently slow work of the soldiers. New Generals were wanted, and when General Simpson resigned, through a sense of his own deficiency, no two people seemed able to agree as to who should be made Commander-in-Chief. Again the Prince and Palmerston were able to work together. "To find any officer against whom nothing can be said implies the choice either of such men as Wellington or Napoleon, or of men who have never been employed at all; and that of itself would be an absolute disqualification," wrote Palmerston. So Albert turned away from his daughter's betrothal and the ashes of the triumphal bonfire, to devise a new plan which would solve the Prime Minister's difficulty. He suggested that the army should be divided into two Army Corps, each under the command of a senior officer of high position, and subject to the general control of the Commander-in-Chief. He elaborated the scheme into a form to be placed before the Cabinet. Within a few days his suggestions were adopted, and Palmerston wrote: "I and all the other members of the Cabinet feel greatly obliged to Your Royal Highness for having suggested an arrangement which had not occurred to any of us."

When Prince Albert had worked out the scheme for reorganisation in the Crimea, he wrote a Memoir on the Examinations and Rules of Admission to Diplomacy and then an address on the Influence of Science and Art on Manufactures. While *The Times* abused him with an article "scandalous in itself and degrading to the country," charging him with having given his daughter to a "paltry German dynasty," he sat with her for an hour every evening, teaching her history and setting her subjects for essays. When he went to bed, he was always tired, but satisfied because his daughter's intellect was "quick and thoroughly sound in operation." Education was an obsession with him now. Like an evangelist of learning, he came to look upon everybody about him as children to be taught and improved.

The schoolmaster was not satisfied with only his daughter's

education. Her betrothal had given him a new field for his lectures. Now he might become a power for good in Prussian affairs, so he wrote long letters to "dear Fritz," talking of the state of Prussia and, going back into the cobwebs of his own childhood, he recaptured and repeated the phrase: "My son, you will be surprised, with how little wisdom the world is governed." He explained "essential principles" to the boy and told him about his betrothed, how she came to him every evening from six to seven, so that he could put her through a "general catechising . . . in order to give precision to her ideas. . . . She is now engaged in writing a short compendium of Roman history. . . ." He talked of the Crimea and of the preparations for winter, of the spring, when there would be fifty thousand Englishmen to force the Russians back. The year closed, and late in November Albert wrote again to Ernest, pleased because England was "thoroughly sound, in spite of the street boy character of the Press." But politics were "boiling . . . as if an outbreak of Vesuvius might be expected."

Such were the letters he wrote and such were his public statements. But in his private diary he wrote: "I have endured frightful torture. . . . I continue to suffer terribly." Rheumatism was creeping deeper into his body and crippling him. The steady flame of duty needed more fuel than he had to spare, and 1855 closed with the first sign that he was being exhausted by his own ardour and anxiety.

Prince Albert was seldom moved to unbridled anger. The one English institution which was capable of making him indignant was the Press. The journalists had always fed upon him as material for slander and ribaldry. Occasionally there had been a paragraph, or an isolated cartoon in which a mild journalist had sought to do him justice. But more often, the hard working Prince of what one writer called the "Cobugs," was gibed at by Fleet Street for everything he did. "Soon there will not be room enough in the same country for the Monarchy and *The Times*," Albert wrote to his brother, just before the Crimea peace was signed. "The first wishes to do good, the latter is satisfied with doing mischief." But he drew a shred of happiness from the fact that the nation remained sound and progressive. "The people bear the sacrifices of the war without grumbling, they love their Queen and adore her, her army and her navy. . . ."

Early in the New Year, the Queen was considering drawings for the Victoria Cross. The war was moving towards its end, peace was in view, and the Queen wished to decorate her soldiers. She turned the drawings over in her hands. She marked the one she preferred with an "X," and asked that the words *For the Brave* should be removed and *For Valour* put in their place. The first might lead her people to suppose that only those who received the coveted decoration had been brave.

The Queen was thrilled by the stories of Florence Nightingale, walking down the arcades of Scutari, and of the dying men sitting up to catch the sound of her footstep or the flutter of her dress. For many years, British women had merely waited in their houses, while their men went out to battle. Theirs had been the useless and anxious mission of watching. Now the Queen's own sex was rising above helplessness; women had even gone out to the very burning edge of war. The Queen was somehow identified with this glorious emancipation. The futility of feminine inactivity was passing in an age when a woman sat upon the throne.

In April, peace was signed, and in this moment, Albert wrote to his brother, *satisfied* with the terms. "Our allies would certainly not have continued the war and we could not have followed them to the Rhine. They have about 40,000 men in hospitals and they lose 250 every day. Our patients number from four to five per cent. The French come begging to our camps, where there is plenty. This does not appear in the newspapers, but exactly for this reason, it is true."

England was caught up in the new excitement of peace. Crippled men were covered with honours. Tired and pale, Florence Nightingale paused in the hospital at Scutari to open a little parcel. In it was a brooch from the Queen, with a note which talked of her "blessed work" and the "bright example" she had set for their sex.

Two miles of ships were aligned for a review at Spithead. The Queen went to Aldershot where fourteen thousand men were drawn up on the plain. She rode past them on a chestnut charger. Helmets and bearskins and shakos were flung to the sky and the dragoons waved their glittering sabres in the sun. Aldershot rang and rang again with the cry "God Save the Queen."

Albert was near her, overlooked in the jubilation. This very camp, which was to become the pulse of the British Army, had been his idea. He had seen the Crystal Palace rise from the calm lawns of Hyde Park to exalt industry; he had seen the bare earth of Aldershot grow into a hive of activity and efficiency, according to a plan of his own making. He had seen the campaigns of the Crimea refreshed by his memoranda and he had seen the army and the navy strengthened through his foresight. He had come to England to contribute to Victoria's greatness, and in this moment of peace, when he was almost forgotten, there was not a line in his most private letters to show that he was resentful. He saw the Queen bestow the Garter upon Palmerston. He saw her write a letter to King Leopold, a letter radiant with praise for Clarendon. "*All*" was owing to Clarendon. He could not be too highly praised.

Russia was subdued, Turkey was protected from trickery and humiliation, and temporary friendship was sealed with France. For a little time, Prince Albert and the Queen forgot everything that existed beyond the coastline of England. The Prince pledged himself to two definite duties—the education of his children and the earnest care that England should never again be found unready with its army and navy.

The Prince of Wales was now fifteen years of age. He learned his lessons slowly, compared with his sister. His temper was quick and he told the harmless fibs of boyhood. Men of Greville's sophistication thought that he was clever and that his manners were good: one of the Queen's ladies talked of his "youthful simplicity," and a courtier wrote in his diary of the "slender, fair boy, with a frank, open countenance." The Prince's parents did not share this engaging view of their son. He was subjected to rules and memoranda from his anxious father; rules to which his nature could never be adapted.

Prince Albert was disappointed in his son. In a letter to his old tutor, he wrote of plans for the summer, and when he mentioned Prince Albert Edward's proposed walking tour, he said that it would follow three weeks of hard work. He added the despondent comment "I hope" to the sentence.

Prince Albert found that his son's essays were "bald, ungrammatical, and badly penned." When he afterwards decided that the Prince should have a small allowance, the Queen accompanied the news with a memorandum. He must "never wear anything extravagant or slang." He was warned against "foolish and worthless persons." At seventeen, the Prince of Wales was allowed his own establishment. The increased liberty was announced, with a letter of instructions. But the letter was written in more gentle phrases than any before it and the show of affection touched the Prince to "the quick." He took it to the Dean of Windsor and showed it to him, "in a flood of tears." He was not used to manifestations of the simple kind of love which his nature needed.

Prince Albert was consoled for the delinquencies of his son when he saw how readily his daughter accepted his teaching. One evening the American Minister sat next to the Princess at dinner and he observed that she was full of frolic and fun, but he added that she had an "excellent head." During the spring of 1856, Prince Albert observed his beloved daughter with sad pride. Early in April she had made her first appearance at a drawing-room, wearing feathers and train. The Queen, who always enjoyed writing detailed descriptions

of dresses, sent an account to Princess Augusta, of the simple white dress, and the train of white antique *moiré*. She was to wear cornflowers upon her dress and train and in her hair . . . as a compliment to her Prussian bridegroom. Prince Albert thought more of his daughter's intellectual equipment. He could influence his wife only through her feelings but he could guide his daughter through the abstract discussions which were his delight. He loved her, perhaps more than any other of his children. Yet he was prepared to lose her. He was not free of the cold, impersonal calculations with which royal parents are often able to judge their heirs; as if the incessant call of duty and the inheritance of monarchic instincts weakened the blind love with which ordinary parents view their children. Prince Albert hid his love within himself. The letters which showed the most human concern for the Princess and her life in Berlin were written by the Queen. "I cannot deny that the thought of her extreme youth fills me with anxiety and misgivings," she wrote to Princess Augusta. The wedding was to be in almost two years' time, but the Queen already wrote of the dangers of allowing the young couple to stay too long in Berlin. "I should regard it as being morally and physically harmful for the first years of their marriage."

Prince Albert's family anxieties did not end with his eldest son. It was now almost certain that his brother would not provide an heir for the Duchy of Coburg, so it fell upon Prince Albert to train one of his own sons to assume the Coburg crown. Here was an entirely new problem. Training a daughter to be consort for a King of Prussia and a son to follow Queen Victoria on the British throne was different from preparing a boy to go to Coburg, to rule German people who flourished upon tradition and all the pretty but small concerns of a minute German Court. The choice fell upon Prince Alfred, and on this matter Prince Albert wrote to his brother several times during 1856 and 1857. Alfred was already living in the Royal Lodge at Windsor with an "intelligent engineer tutor" who was preparing him for the navy.

Duke Ernest was anxious. His young nephew's taste for the navy made him afraid that he would not wish to give up his English life when the time came, and transplant his home, his interests and his affections to Coburg. He was anxious also because he found that

Prince Alfred did not show much interest in his Saxon ancestors and the story of his father's family.

Prince Alfred wanted nothing more than to be a sailor. His father wrote: ". . . this is a passion which we, as his parents, believe not to have the right to subdue. It is not right to deny the wishes of a young soul, but we do what we can. . . ." He was pleased with this tenacity in his second son. ". . . his love for the bluejackets has always turned up again, and always with greater force, and with the remarkable perseverance which this child possesses, it is not to be expected that he will give up the idea easily. An example of his perseverance is with his violin, which he learned to play secretly, in his free time, wishing to surprise us. . . ."

Prince Albert had still another consideration. "Bertie may die and Alfred would then be heir to the English throne." If they made a German of him, it would be difficult for him and for his country. There were "almost endless reasons why Alfred's education must not be for Coburg alone."

In May, 1857, Prince Alfred went to Coburg and to Gotha. His father announced the plan in a letter to Florschütz who still lived in Coburg. "You will see no likeness to me in him, but you will find him a dear, sensible lad, full of intelligence and keen to learn. . . . I wish I could take him round myself and show him all the beloved spots—you will understand my feeling. But I must content myself with imagining it." Prince Alfred fulfilled his father's promise. He walked in Rosenau garden, he stood at the window of the room in which his father was born, and he heard the deep-voiced river and the sprinkling of the fountain. He saw the fortress crowning the hill, far away, through a tunnel between the trees. He came back to England "full of joy and freshness," liking Coburg more than any other place he had seen during his journey.

Albert sighed a little over his own lost childhood as he read of his son's adventure. "All the plagues and serious business" of which every day brought him plenty, were necessary to bring him back to reality. His soul, he wrote, "was lost in the dear memories."

He wrote in a letter to his step-mother: "I get on pretty well, in spite of a weak stomach, with which I came into the world, and which I shall take with me to the grave." The boy who had come

from Coburg only sixteen years before, was bald and tired, pale and old. The Queen watched him and trembled. Once when he was ill he told her that he thought he would never have the strength to fight against death.

The Prince continued to displease the aristocracy and irritate the newspapers, but he never failed to impress all who came into his presence with his disinterestedness. In 1857, when the Anglo-French friendship was threatened by Russia making overtures to France, it was Albert who wrote a long, brilliant letter to the Emperor, placing the British point of view before him. This was an opportunity which Palmerston would have snatched greedily three years before. Now, he said that Prince Albert's letter was "most excellent" and, with Clarendon in agreement, he encouraged this usurpation of the Foreign Minister's rights.

After Napoleon III had been at Osborne, in 1857, he went home, refreshed by Albert's example. "One goes away from him . . . more disposed to do good," wrote the Emperor. There were constant signs of his unflagging merit. When Prince Albert was appointed Master of Trinity House, he became interested in the cause of the ballast-heavers. The story of their emancipation is best told in their own Memorial, written for the Queen after the Prince's death. "Before he came to our rescue, we could only get work through a body of riverside publicans and middlemen, who made us drink before they would give us a job. . . . The consequence was that we were in a pitiable state; this truck-drinking system was ruining us body and soul, and our families too.

" . . . We got no help till we sent an appeal to your late Royal Consort. . . . He at once listened to us . . . he could put himself down from the throne he shared to the wretched home of us poor men. . . . He enquired himself into the evils that oppressed us. . . . At once our wrongs were redressed, and the system that had ruined us swept away."

The ballast-heavers came to call him *Albert the Good* and the name was repeated far and wide. There sprang up among middle class and poorer people a true love for his worth.

England was already becoming complacent over the Crimean peace. She was quick to invent excuses for disarmament, and for the reducing of estimates for both services. Herein lay cause

for new fear. Prince Albert helped the Queen to write to Lord Palmerston, complaining of the retrenchments and reminding him of the state of helplessness in which England had been found when the storm of the Crimea broke over her. He did not wish this to happen again. "I am constantly at work," he wrote. His main duty at the moment was another memorandum of twenty-eight pages, urging the Ministers not to squander the good lessons of the war.

The Prince had one new and stimulating ally. When Florence Nightingale was back in England she went to Balmoral. Her quiet manner had an astounding effect upon the members of the Court. She walked in the garden, against the background of new granite walls and towers, "modest, retiring and fearful of notice . . . a slight, delicate frame," containing such "depth of character and thought."

Florence Nightingale seemed to strike awe into the ladies and gentlemen. Wearing a high black gown and a plain little morning cap, she sat beside the Queen, pleading for the soldiers, telling her of this wretched man and that poignant scene in the wards of Scutari. She told them that the Scottish soldiers bore pain best, then the English, and last of all, "poor Paddy." There was one armless soldier who had become the Queen's own charge. The poor fellow had friends who helped him to the brandy bottle. Prince Albert thought him incorrigible, but the Queen insisted—she would *never* give him up. Miss Nightingale smiled her thanks.

In March, Baron Stockmar came to England for the last time. He was seventy years old, and when he returned to Coburg he wrote to King Leopold that all was over. He was "no longer equal" to the old, fierce rôle which he had played. "I must say good-bye, and this time forever," he wrote. Prince Albert was almost equally exhausted and he was not yet forty years old. A small compensation was given to him in June of 1857, when Queen Victoria bestowed upon him the title of "Prince Consort." It came after many years of obstruction on the part of Ministers who had not been inclined, or brave enough, to launch the necessary legislation. Queen Victoria acted alone, after many demurs from Ministers, and she gave her husband the title by Royal Letters

Patent. Her views were defined in a memorandum which she sent to Lord Derby in 1856. "When I first married," she wrote, "we had much difficulty on this subject; much bad feeling was shown, and several members of the Royal Family showed bad grace in giving precedence to the Prince. . . . While last year, the Emperor of the French treated the Prince as a Royal personage, his uncle declined to come to Paris avowedly because he would not give precedence to the Prince; and on the Rhine in 1845 the King of Prussia could not give the place to the Queen's husband which common civility required, because of the presence of an Archduke, the third son of an uncle of the then reigning Emperor of Austria, who would not give the *pas*, and whom the King would not offend."

The Queen thought the title of King inappropriate but she stated that after "considering the question for nearly sixteen years," she had come to the conclusion "that the title which is now by universal consent given to him of 'Prince Consort,' with the highest rank in and out of Parliament, immediately after the Queen, and before every other Prince of the Royal family, should be the one assigned to the husband of the Queen Regnant *once and for all.*"

Even after eighteen years of service the Prince was not allowed to accept the title without a sarcastic comment in *The Times*. The honour had come too late to mean much to Prince Albert. The announcement to his brother was dismissed in two sentences. "I am to have the title *Prince Consort of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland*. This ought to have been done, as you thought yourself, at our wedding. . . ."

The Prince Consort turned to less personal affairs in his letters and wrote: "India is giving us much trouble. It is impossible to speak of the horrors which happen there." News of the cruelties practised by the Sepoys had reached England. Again it was the Prince who stirred the Ministers. He was alarmed by their tardiness, but he had faith in British character. While the ghastly story of India moved on to Cawnpore and to Nana Sahib's infamy, the statesmen were gradually forced to rise to action. The Court went to Balmoral with the satisfying news that the Home Government was to raise fifteen, instead of ten, battalions

and that the militia was to be called out to the number of fifteen thousand instead of ten thousand. With steady, dismal rain falling on the beeches outside, the Queen and the Prince bent over their maps of India, day after day. One thousand Europeans were besieged, hungry and in terror, within the walls of Lucknow. Almost a quarter of a million Indian troops had risen against twenty-four thousand British. It was not until the new year that better news came. Lucknow was relieved and the beleaguered city blessed Colin Campbell's name.

Britain was passing through a bad season. Artisans were being turned into the streets from the closing factories; banks and companies were bankrupt. But as the year went on, India became more peaceful and the British business men recovered from their panic. This did not lift the Prince's depression. Disraeli had said that he thought him to be the best educated man he had ever met. Dr. Stanley saw in him "a steady support to all that was most excellent" in the Church. The Queen reflected in January that Albert had raised monarchy to the highest pinnacle of respect. But, in the deep shadows of his room, Albert drew no solace from these compliments. He wrote to Stockmar: "I never remember to have had so much to do as I have had lately." He wrote to the Duchess of Kent: "Our Ministers use fine phrases, but they do nothing. My blood boils within me."

In January of 1858 the Princess Royal was married. Thirty-five princes and princesses kissed her hand and she left England amid grand celebrations and in apparent happiness. But the tie with her father was now so deep and strong that she dreaded leaving him. Their understanding and devotion were complete, and they had come to depend upon each other for the sympathy which they rarely expressed in words. The Princess had said, "I think it will kill me to take leave of dear Papa." The Prince Consort went with her to Gravesend, after the wedding, and there they said their quiet good-bye. When they came to the river, snow was falling, and they stood shivering on the wharf. Then the Princess went on board and disappeared below. Her father waited until the ship faded out of sight, but his daughter did not come on deck again to wave to him.

The Prince went back to London and, in his first letter, he

released the sadness which he usually kept within himself. He wrote to his daughter: "My heart was very full when yesterday you leaned your forehead on my breast to give free vent to your tears. I am not of a demonstrative nature . . . you can hardly know how dear you have always been to me. . . ."

## *Chapter Twenty-four*

1858-1859

An attack upon the life of Napoleon III by conspirators who had hatched their plot in England was the first great international trouble of the new year. Grenades filled with detonating powder were thrown beneath the Emperor's carriage by members of the Carbonari Society. The Emperor was slightly injured and people near to him were either killed or wounded. The carefully nursed friendship between France and England received a violent shock. The French accused the British of harbouring assassins, and were further hostile when it was learned that the grenades had been made in England. Lord Palmerston yielded to the pressure of the French Foreign Minister and introduced a Conspiracy Bill before the House. The Bill failed: the Ministry was defeated and Lord Derby was asked to form a Government, much against his will. The Prince Consort was more depressed than ever, although Palmerston was removed from office. He wrote to his brother of a "Tory ministry with a radical programme, carrying out republican measures with a Conservative majority, against Liberal opposition." Such circumstances presented grave difficulties for a constitutional monarch.

The Prince Consort conquered his alarm over the new Government. He made suggestions for the improvement of the new Bill for the Government of India, and was satisfied to see all but one of his modifications adopted. Nearer to his heart was the wayward character of his son. The Prince of Wales had acquitted himself "extremely well" at his Confirmation, but his father was anxious. The London season was beginning and he felt that it would be best to keep the Prince of Wales away from the capital. "As long as he is neither fish nor flesh . . . it will not be good for him," he wrote to Coburg. Albert's great joy was to think of his daughter in Germany.

He imagined her at Sans Souci, pouring out English tea in the sunshine; he imagined her walking in the Potsdam gardens, letting her liberal English ideas fall upon the ears of whomever walked beside her. Berlin had greeted her kindly, although her old-fashioned, plum-coloured silk dress and her ruddy complexion gave some of them an impression of reliability rather than fashion. But her eyes

encharmed everybody. They were "green like the sea on a sunny day."

Her father wrote her long letters upon politics and metaphysics. Sometimes he relaxed and talked to her of other things—of homesickness. He understood her feelings in the uncomfortable Prussian castle, where life was shorn of the elegance to which she had been accustomed. She still called England "home," and she cried when she heard Ernest talking in one of the passages, because his voice was like her father's.

Talk of homesickness awakened the old picture of Rosenau in Albert's mind. He tried to recapture the spontaneous happiness of his youth and, in May, he went to Coburg and to Rosenau, after an absence of thirteen years. He walked in the gardens of his childhood, but his own ghost had fled and the hand that picked pansies in the garden, placing them tenderly in a box for Victoria, was fat and middle-aged and the eyes which looked through the tunnel of trees, to the rosy fortress on the hill, were tired. He walked over the fields where as a boy he had watched the harvesters at work, the apples ripening on the trees, and the chicory flowers, like blue stars in the yellow grass. But the view was obscured for him by a dreadful vision of papers and memoranda.

There was something horrible about his return to Coburg. Stockmar was waiting for him: an old man, still shrewd and full of advice. Others had forgotten Albert, for a new generation had arisen. He turned to the shells and birds he had collected as a child. He looked at them, he touched them with his heavy fingers and he revived the memories of finding them. But the pleasures escaped him. "I have eaten nothing all day," he wrote to the Queen, who was still in England.

He sat up in Coburg late at night. Even here, he could not forget Westminster and Palmerston and Derby and state affairs. He heard the watchman's horn from the church tower, and he heard the high bell and the low bell strike the hours. Still he wrote. Depression had conquered him in some terrible way. He could no longer believe in happiness; he could no longer look upon the Coburg scene as anything but the background of his own sadness.

"I have become an utter stranger here," he complained to the Queen. He admitted his depression in his letters. His own memory

had disappointed him and his own childhood had crumbled away. He came back to England a disappointed man.

Three months after, the Prince Consort went to Germany again; this time to Berlin, with the Queen. His first grandchild was to be born in the following January. He wrote, "This will give to the coming grey hairs in my whiskers a certain significance." The signs of age were not in his imagination. When he spoke at Cherbourg before the Emperor, on the way to Germany, he hesitated. The Queen's hand shook so that she could not drink her coffee. But there was happiness waiting for them in their daughter's home. On the way, they passed a little station near to Hanover and there they saw Baroness Lehzen waving her handkerchief to them. But the train did not stop. They paused in the romantic town whence the Queen's Hanoverian ancestors came to England and then they sped on to Brandenburg where they found their "darling child" smiling upon the platform, with a nosegay in her hand.

The Princess seemed to be lost in the gaunt, strange Prussian discomfort. But the Queen noted that she had tried to introduce a little Englishness; a little of their own delicacy of decoration into the rooms. There were flowering creepers wound prettily about the screens and lamps and pictures.

The Princess was afraid of her new life and afraid of becoming a mother. She played duets with her father in the evening and they looked at albums together. But she was "low and nervous." "God knows, I felt the same!" wrote the Queen. ". . . I cannot be with her at that very critical moment, when every other mother goes to her child!"

Almost as soon as they arrived, the Prince Consort was taken away from his daughter to wrestle with the draft for the Indian Proclamation. The Minister for Foreign Affairs was with them in Brandenburg, so Albert was able to discuss this deeply serious document. He decided, with the Queen's support, that it was entirely wrong. It talked of Britain's power over India instead of her munificence. The document "should breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence and religious toleration," insisted the Queen, in returning the draft to Lord Derby. It was Albert who tempered the phrases of the Proclamation so that India should not be too deeply hurt.

The Prince Consort said little, and even in his diary he wrote no

more than a note on the "very painful" parting with his daughter. But an unexpected pleasure was waiting for him when he arrived in the Solent, on the way home. Prince Alfred was on the wharf at Osborne, wearing his midshipman's jacket and cap. He blushed as his father greeted him. The news was good. Prince Alfred had passed his examination, solving the mathematical problems "almost without a fault" and completing his translations without a dictionary.

The Prince Consort was so pleased that he wrote to Lord Derby, sending him also the examination papers, to prove Alfred's worth. Lord Derby made a picturesque reply. He was grateful, he said, that Her Majesty's Ministers had to pass no such examination. It would increase the difficulty of framing an Administration. For the moment, the Prince was genuinely happy.

The Prince Consort had been served by a loyal Swiss servant named Cart since he was a little boy. Cart had carried Albert up the spiral staircase of Rosenau as a child; he had sharpened his wooden sword and he had watched him grow through the years of his education, to the day of his marriage in England. Because they were always together, there are no letters to prove how dear master and servant were to each other. But the Queen's Journal shows that Cart adored the Prince and that, through all the anxieties of his life in England, Albert regarded Cart as a friend to whom he turned in times of unhappiness. The servant died in August of 1858.

While the Queen was dressing, the Prince went into her room, pale, with a telegram in his hand. "Mein armer Cart ist gestorben!" he said. The Queen wrote in her diary: "I turn sick now in writing it. . . . I burst into tears. All day long the tears would rush every moment to my eyes. . . . Cart was with Albert from his seventh year. . . . He was the only link my loved one had about him which connected him with his childhood, the only one with whom he could talk over old times. I cannot think of my dear husband without Cart! He seemed part of himself. . . . A sad breakfast we had indeed. Albert felt the loss so much, and we had to choke our grief down all day."

The Prince made no complaint and no record of his sorrow. Ten

years before, he would have written to Ernest, or to his step-mother to unburden himself of his grief. But a curious, ingrowing morbidity was possessing him. So much had happened to thwart him and to hurt him that he complained no longer. He turned from his bereavement to fresh duties and to new memoranda. He drew up a long report upon the reorganisation of the Indian Army. A few weeks afterwards he noted that his own ideas were confirmed by Lord Clyde and other officers who knew India well.

On January 27th, 1859, the Prince Consort's first grandchild was born. His interest was still closer riveted to Prussia and when, in August, the Prince of Prussia was appointed Regent, because of the King's failure in mind and body, the Prince Consort assumed still another duty. He appointed himself adviser and tried to draw the Regent into the theories and conception of government which he had learned from Stockmar and his uncle. He was now the teacher, as they had been his teachers, in the beginning. He went further and criticised even his uncle in Belgium for the weakness of his agent in conducting conversations with Napoleon III. He seemed, in these last years of his life, to be guided by some awful power and to be sustained by a last, magnificent spurt of energy. In his most arrogant moment, the Emperor never forgot this power. He said to Cavour, "There are but three men in Europe, we two, and a third, whom I will not name."

When the dangers of war between France and Austria were agitating Prussia, it was to Albert that the Prince of Prussia wrote for help. If only Prince Albert would give the advice, he said, it would "be decisive" for Prussia.

The Prince Consort wrote him long letters—letters which were so cold and thoughtful that they still stand out from the shadows of history as remarkable documents. His courageous and frank advice went as far as the Prussian Chamber and, a few days afterwards, Prussia's foreign policy was announced. It was exactly what Prince Albert had indicated. His influence was growing. He wrote a long treatise for the Princess Royal, on the advantages of Constitutional Government. With this in her hand, she proceeded to impress the advantages of her father's liberal teaching still further upon her Prussian friends. Her schemes were in no way welcome to the ears of the Prussian aristocracy.

Albert complained: "I am weary and out of heart." The struggle over the Reform Bill was beginning. Almost every day, Mr. Disraeli's grand letters came to tell the Queen and Albert what had happened in the House. With his pen, political squabbles took on a certain magnificence. The Derby Government wished for a franchise based on personal property. While Napoleon III intrigued against Austria, while Cavour dreamed of emancipation, and while Prussia wondered, a little anxiously, upon which land the bomb would fall, the British Parliament wrangled through the contest over the new Bill. Disraeli told the Queen that Palmerston was nothing less than "infinitely audacious." It was pleasant to feel that a really intelligent man like Mr. Disraeli agreed with their old prejudice. The Prince Consort too thought Palmerston nothing less than "insolent." The wrangle and the conditions leading up to the change in Government need not be told again in these pages. In June, Lord Derby placed his resignation in the Queen's hands—at a moment when Europe was disturbed and when the Queen needed a secure and formidable Government more than ever.

Ten days afterwards, Lord Palmerston came to the Queen again as Prime Minister, in his seventy-fourth year. He seemed to be as vigorous and alarming as ever. The Prince Consort wrote to Stockmar, "Our new Ministry is formed and in office. It is looked upon as the strongest that was ever formed."

## *Chapter Twenty-five*

1859-1861

War between France and Austria was declared in April 1859. The Queen was disappointed in the "wicked folly" of France and of her friend, Napoleon III. The Prince Consort had never shared her enthusiasm for the Emperor, either at Windsor or St. Cloud, and he accepted the alarming news as merely another gloomy experience in the passage of his life. "God knows we are in a sad mess," wrote the Queen. France and Sardinia urged on their campaign to oust Austria from her Italian provinces and Louis Napoleon gained his victories, which culminated at the battle of Solferino. But the cost to France was terrible, and in July the Emperor was as anxious for peace as he had been for war. The Peace of Villafranca was signed on July 11th. Louis Napoleon returned to Paris with the reputation of a successful soldier and the satisfaction of having given Italy the opportunity of being "mistress of her own destinies."

The sudden rising of a new conqueror in Europe made both Germany and England restless. Once satisfied, he might turn his ambitions towards the Rhineland, and in an interview with Mr. Odo Russell, the Pope said that he believed that Louis Napoleon would attack England "sooner or later." Fear spread through the country and stimulated the volunteer movement so that in the following summer, one hundred and thirty thousand had been enrolled. The recommendations of the National Defence Committee were adopted, and in August of 1860 twenty-one thousand volunteers marched past the Queen in Hyde Park.

The Prince Consort was curiously silent during these months. Within a few hours of the English coast was France, with half a million soldiers and the strongest steam fleet in the world. Five years before, the Prince would have turned to such circumstances with eagerness and endless memoranda would have been written. Now he complained of his failing health and energies. "I believe worry over political affairs . . . is chiefly to blame for it," he wrote to his daughter. He complained to her of "this suffering and difficult world." He was tired. He read many thick volumes to prepare his speech for the British Association for the Promotion of

Science. "I . . . write, perspire, and tear what I have written to shreds in sheer vexation," he wrote. The will was as splendid as ever, but the nervous energy needed to sustain it was slowly dying away.

Again in January the Prince Consort complained of being "tired to death with work, vexation and worry." He turned from the provoking affairs of State and was refreshed by his children. His family was complete—there were four sons and five daughters, most of them developing the qualities of character he most admired. His eldest daughter was in Prussia. Her baby, William, in a flutter of white muslin and black bows, was chuckling and smiling with promise. The Queen was not quite so pleased with her daughter. She thought the Prussians pompous and she "pitched into" her for showing symptoms of the same fault.

The Prince of Wales was at Oxford and he had passed a difficult examination. During one vacation, he went to Coburg, where Stockmar scrutinised him and wrote that he saw many signs of improvement. The Prince Consort tried to understand his son a little more clearly. "He has a strange nature," he wrote. ". . . he has no interest in things, but all the more for persons. This trait in his character, which is often found in the Royal Family, has made the family so popular. But it also arouses the dangerous inclination for what the people here call 'small talk.' "

Prince Alfred also pleased his father. He was attentive and eager and the Prince Consort was especially pleased to note that in the brain of his sailor son, prejudice had no chance against straightforward logic.

The future of Princess Alice was also being planned. In July, the Prince Consort wrote to his brother that Prince Louis of Hesse had seemed to take a fancy to Princess Alice while he was in England. Albert wrote: ". . . and he seems to have lighted a flame in her also. . . . We heard nothing but good about him and what we saw of him pleased us very much." Of the younger children none delighted the Prince Consort more than Princess Beatrice, who was described by Lady Augusta Bruce as "enchanting and bewitching."

In March, the Prince Consort was at Osborne again. The snow was gone and the stiff camellia trees were in blossom. He was

elated because he had not lost any of his pet plants. He was pleased too, with the news from Westminster. He had fallen under the spell of Gladstone's speeches and he wrote: "Gladstone is now the real leader of the House of Commons, and works with an energy and vigour altogether incredible. . . ."

In March, Lord John Russell wrote to him, asking for information and guidance for his future dealings with Germany. The Prince answered in a letter of two thousand words which tidied up the chaos in Lord John's mind and put the history of German affairs and his own theories into a nutshell. The vanity of an ordinary human might have found satisfaction and pleasure in thus being applied to for guidance by a Prime Minister.

The Prince turned from the Old World to the New. It was difficult for English people of his day to have a clear idea of what was meant by *The Queen's Empire*. A few rich Australian sheep-owners had come home with their fortunes. New Zealand produce was being served on English tables and loyal people had succumbed to the experiment of drinking Empire wines. But the new, far-away countries were associated with ne'er-do-well sons.

The Prince Consort had no such prejudices or feelings. He contemplated Africa and Canada and saw in them a cheering picture. Indeed, he talked of their achievements and of their affection for his children, as the "only bright side of the political horizon."

He had a sudden and poetic realisation of the possibilities in the half-known edges of the world. Prince Alfred was to go to the Cape of Good Hope to lay the foundation stone of the breakwater at the foot of Table Mountain. The Prince of Wales was to go to Canada to open the bridge across the St. Lawrence "in Victoria's name." In writing to his brother, Albert said that the Canadians wished "to show the Americans how happy, free and yet monarchial it is possible to be." He drew up for himself a picture full of fantasy; a picture of the mighty St. Lawrence, with its rafts of white ice, the bridge which set the seal of progress upon the new earth, and he remembered that the Cape of Good Hope looked out over the meeting place of two oceans, towards the mysterious, white, undiscovered pole. His sons were to go to inaugurate important developments of far-away corners of the earth, in tactful speeches, written by himself. There was to be no mistake or

confusion of phrases when his sons spoke in their mother's name.

In May, the Prince Consort retired to his room at Osborne to write to his daughter in Berlin. From his window he could see the lilacs, the peonies and the thorn. He was "tortured" and he poured out his complaint to her. There were to be two public dinners, one with ten speeches and one with seven. He had to attend the British Association at Oxford, lay a foundation stone in London, give prizes at Wellington College, sit on several commissions, go to Ascot, which he loathed, attend balls and concerts and wrestle with Parliament. Before he began the letter he had walked over to Carisbrooke, to see the donkey in the treadmill which brings the water buckets up from the ancient well. When he arrived home he wrote: "The donkey in Carisbrooke . . . is my true counterpart. He, too, would rather munch thistles in the Castle Moat . . . small are the thanks he gets for his labour."

In the summer, a new baby was born in Berlin. Princess Beatrice, then aged three, found herself so busy that when she was asked a question, she complained that she had no time to spare. "I must write letters to my niece," she protested. The engagement of Princess Alice was announced, and the Prince Consort wrote to his brother of the bridegroom being straightforward, open and reliable. "If true love could guarantee a happy future life," then, he was certain, such happiness awaited his daughter when she went to live in the Court at Darmstadt.

But the news from Canada was the most satisfying of all. The Prince of Wales had opened the great bridge across the St. Lawrence, and when he delivered his father's speech, he had won the hearts of the Canadian people. The rough fishermen and their wives in Newfoundland had been "wild about him." "God bless his pretty face and send him a good wife," they cried. The Archdeacon's wife noticed his gentle and reverential manner with the Bishop who had walked through the Cathedral with the Prince. He had been so touched by the boy's charm that he sobbed when he was gone: "God bless my dear young Prince." Albert smiled again. The fruit upon the tree was growing richer: the patient and anxious hours, beneath the persistent green lamp upon his desk, were bringing their reward.

The winter came, and, with it, more and more complaints. The

Prince could not sleep: he turned his head upon the pillow, his gums swollen, the nerves in his cheeks inflamed, his brain agitated by the procession of affairs. The Queen watched him, anxious and afraid. Again and again she recalled his saying that he had little will to live. One day he was "too miserable" even to write to his daughter. Their correspondence had aroused the suspicions of *The Times*, and the newspaper made new insinuations against him. He threw the paper aside and wrote to Lord John Russell of the weakness of the navy. "It is a perfect disgrace to our country." The self-assurance of the English exasperated him at times. The French were building ships and carrying out new and proud experiments! The Prince's letters to the Ministers and the Admiralty became angry. Within a few hours the First Lord of the Admiralty reassured him that more iron-cased ships were to be built and that France would be watched more carefully.

Christmas came, more coldly than for fifty years. The family was gathered together within Windsor Castle: all but Albert's beloved eldest daughter. He wrote pathetic letters to her. *She* understood him, *she* responded to his ideas as quickly as she sympathised with his depression. In his abstraction he called Prince Louis "Fritz," so much were his thoughts with the couple in Prussia.

"Oh! if you, with Fritz and the children, were only with us," he pleaded again. His children were to be scattered over the world. The Prince of Wales was going to Cambridge, Prince Alfred was going to North America, Princess Alice was to be married and go to Darmstadt. He looked out of the Castle windows and saw the thick snow upon the ground. He watched the hungry birds, and, breaking a piece of bread in his hand, he threw the crumbs to them in the snow. "I am tired," he complained, again and again. But the world was marching on. Affairs had to be adjusted, advice had to be given, children had to be guided, France had to be watched—India and China also. He rose from his bed earlier and earlier and when he took a little leisure, he admitted it guiltily. "I don't understand people making a business of shooting," he said, rushing back to his desk and working until midnight. He seemed to take the winter of life into himself. He watched the people growing old about him; his letters were morbid with the weight from which he would not allow himself to escape.

"I can't write more," he complained to his brother. "I have so much to do, sad and important things, so much to console and see after." The year 1861, the most terrible in Queen Victoria's life, began with the news of the death of the King of Prussia. The letters from Berlin told how their daughter had hurried through the dark streets on foot, to watch beside the King's bed. He was released from his melancholy life and Prince William was King, with Victoria's close friend, Princess Augusta, beside him. She wrote of her sorrow from Osborne, but she used the occasion to say to him: "Although at times differences of opinion may arise between us, yet the interests of both countries, their religion and their outlook, are so similar that I am certain they will be united by an ever-strengthening bond."

In March, the Prince Consort sank deeper into grief and his courage seemed to falter. There was one figure near to him from whom he might have learned a lesson. The Duchess of Kent was ill and in terrible pain, yet, in the evening, when they sat together, she would cross to the pianoforte and with her hands bandaged to hide the marks of her disease, she would awaken an old ballad from the keys; some song which they had both known.

In February of 1861, there came a day when the Duchess could not play the pianoforte any more. She was at Frogmore with her Ladies and they had been pleased, on the day of their arrival from London, to see that she was in "much better spirits," unwrapping all her treasures from their folds of silver paper and winding up the big old watch which had belonged to her husband. But illness had overwhelmed her courage, and when the doctor saw her he told the Queen afterwards that there was nothing but pain and suffering to be expected. The Queen and the Prince Consort hurried down from London a few days afterwards, but the end was coming quickly and they were too late to be recognised. Three times during the last night, Queen Victoria crept down to her mother's room, carrying a little lamp. In the darkness she could hear the heavy breathing and the ticking of her father's watch—she had not heard it for twenty-three years. Standing in the bedroom, she remembered her childhood, the old distresses of Kensington, the hazardous years through which she had been guided by Albert into calm. At four o'clock in the morning, she stole down again,

and kneeling beside the bed, she kissed her mother's hand, whispering "Mama," so lovingly and earnestly as if the sound must arouse her. The next time she came downstairs, the Queen bent over her mother and heard her breathing grow fainter and fainter. At last it ceased, and, in that moment, the old watch struck half-past nine. Albert was with her. He cried for a moment, then he raised the Queen and led her away. He was "so tender and kind, and full of loving affection." "Well, our beloved one knew his heart," wrote Lady Augusta Bruce, as she watched him moving about the gloomy rooms of Frogmore. ". . . could you have seen his tears, could you see his sorrow now—his fondness for the Queen. Oh! may God bless them in their Children and reward them. . . . I never saw such tact as his. Oh! He is one in millions—well might She love Him as She did. I was so struck with His appreciation of Her. It was so true, and for One who is supposed to place intellect and reasoning powers above all, so remarkable. . . ."

In June, the Queen had recovered, but the tragic rumour that her reason was affected had spread far into Europe. "I cannot understand how these horrid, vile rumours about her mental state could arise," the Prince Consort wrote to Ernest. "People here and on the continent are much occupied with these rumours. They have annoyed me tremendously, as I know what the consequences might be. She herself is perfectly unaware of all this scandal."

## *Chapter Twenty-six*

1861

The betrothal of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra of Denmark was announced and explained in almost the last letter written by the Prince Consort to his brother, in July of 1861. Duke Ernest had protested against a match between "Bertie" and a Danish Princess and had gone so far as to use his influence upon his nephew, thus jeopardising the carefully made plans of the Prince Consort and the Princess Royal, who had met Princess Alexandra in Berlin. Albert wrote in anger to his brother:

"I received your protest against a marriage between Bertie and a Danish Princess. . . . Your position, your relationship and your friendship give you a right to think of Bertie's welfare and the political unions for his future. But what annoys me is, that you spoke to a third person about such delicate and secret affairs, and that you sent me a memorandum which was written by a *secretary*.

" . . . We took care not to let Bertie know about the existence of Princess Alexandra, but we told him of all other possibilities. We find it rather strange that just *you* should tell him about this one Princess and warn him not to marry her, nor to allow himself to be induced to marry her. . . . It was wrong to do so behind our backs.

" . . . Now he has heard from all sides about the beauty of the Princess and he has seen photographs of her in the rooms of the Duchess of Cambridge, at Kew, and they confirmed what he had heard. We explained the political difficulties such a marriage would bring with it, as well as we could. He understood, as well as a young man of his age and his capacities is able to understand them.

"But as we practically have the public opinion against us, and as we should also have our ministers, people and the Press against us, we were anxious to find another lady suitable for Bertie. (It is his wish to marry soon and it is in his interests, morally, socially and politically.) But we find there is really no other Princess he could marry. The Princess of Meiningen and the

daughter of Prince Albrecht of Prussia, he had the opportunity of seeing when he was in Berlin, but they did not please him.

"Vicky has racked her brain, too, to help us to find some one, but in vain. The daughter of Prince Friedrich of the Netherlands is too ugly. There are positively *no other Princesses* except the sister of Louis . . . and this would connect us for a second time with Darmstadt. All this made it clear to us that Princess Alexandra is the only one to be chosen.

"But now we must see that this marriage is not looked upon as a triumph of Denmark, over us and Prussia, and that it came about without the Danes knowing about it, without the knowledge of our Ministers and the Cambridges, but quite alone, through the mediation of our Prussian children . . . if we wish to found a happy future for Bertie, we have no other choice. . . ."

The letter was written from Osborne, whither the Court had gone in the spring. The Queen left more and more of her duties to her husband. She had spent many hours going through her mother's papers—diaries of the days when she was a child at Kensington. She had found a record of the anxious love which her mother had hidden, behind her royal ambitions. "I have found little books with the accounts of my babyhood, and they show such unbounded tenderness! OH! I am so wretched to think how, *for a time, two people most wickedly estranged us.*" She shivered at the memory of Conroy and Lehzen. New and wonderful changes had come to her. The Prince wrote to Stockmar of how the Queen had come to understand her mother during the last two years; of how she had watched over her with all the affection she had withheld in the first years when she came to the throne. He had also watched "the influence of this upon her own character."

The Prince seemed to tire of the wrangles of Westminster: again he turned his attention to Europe. He could not sleep at night. Ill, feverish, with pain in his limbs, he lay in bed, planning memoranda upon the Schleswig-Holstein affair, planning long letters to his Prussian friends and theorising over their government. Later in the year he did not sleep for fourteen nights. He appeared in public two or three times, but people saw that he was pallid and worn.

Late in October, the Court went to Windsor. The Prince went to

London one day to look into the affairs of the Duchy of Cornwall and also to preside over a meeting of Governors of Wellington College. He returned to Windsor to learn that the King of Portugal was dying. Only a little time before, Sir James Graham had died. Depression settled upon Albert again: "I am fearfully in want of a true friend," he pleaded to Stockmar. The Prince's doctors and secretaries were anxious—he was killing himself with work. Preparations for the second great Exhibition, Sandhurst, Wellington College, the Duchy business, the Horticultural Society—he rushed from one thing to another. Yet he warned his daughter: ". . . spare yourself." In the same letter he wrote to her of "true happiness" and he told her that it came only from an inner consciousness that one's efforts were directed to good and useful work.

It was about this time that the Prince Consort said to the Queen: "I do not cling to life. You do; but I set no store by it. If I knew that those I love were well cared for, I should be quite ready to die to-morrow. . . . If I had a severe illness, I should give up at once, I should not struggle for life."

This confession, which the Queen remembered with awful certainty, was a key to the depths of the Prince's character. His religion was deep within him, but it did not hold him to the earth with any great love.

On November 22nd, Prince Albert drove over to Sandhurst to see the buildings of the new Staff College. The day was cold and dark and the rain fell incessantly. He returned to Windsor, ill and tired. On the following Sunday the weather cleared again and, with the Queen, he walked down to Frogmore. The house was deserted and the dome of the new Mausoleum rose above the trees. When they arrived back in the Castle, Albert wrote in his diary: "Am full of rheumatic pains, and feel thoroughly unwell. Have scarcely closed my eyes at night for the last fortnight."

On Monday he travelled through the cold and storm to Cambridge. During the fourteen sleepless nights, he had thought anxiously of his son. He must see him, in the midst of his undergraduate life. He stayed beside the Cam for one day and was back in Windsor on Tuesday—again he wrote that he was wretched and that his back and legs were in pain.

The horror which aroused the Prince from his dreariness and

sickness for the last time was the Trent affair. The Americans had outraged the British Flag and the British Ministers were hot for reprisals. The drafts of their dispatches were sent down to Windsor and, with hasty, feverish hands, the Prince turned over their pages. The language must be softened! Albert wrote out a new dispatch, in the Queen's name. It has since been said that the carefulness of his phrasing saved England and America from war. He took the draft into the Queen's room. She looked at him anxiously and saw the wretched and ill expression upon his face. Then she looked at the writing. He had hardly been able to hold the pen.

On December 5th the Queen wrote: "He did not smile or take much notice of me. . . . His manner all along was so unlike himself, and he had sometimes such a strange, wild look. I left him to get dressed in a state of cruel anxiety. . . . In the evening he seemed more himself, most dear and affectionate when I went in with little Beatrice, whom he kissed. He quite laughed at some of her new French verses which I made her repeat."

Dr. Jenner came, and he urged the Queen to speak to the Ministers. But Albert would not even go to bed. Three days afterwards, he seemed to recover a little of his power. The day was sunny—he looked out of the window and was pleased by the cheerful scene. He asked for some music, and Princess Alice went into the next room and played "Eine Feste Burg ist Unser Gott." Later, when evening came, the Queen sat beside him and read *Peveril of the Peak* aloud. He was more contented. When Victoria leaned near to him, he held her hand and stroked her face. Day after day, the vigil continued. One morning, the Queen went over to him at eight o'clock and found him sitting up, to take his beef tea. . . . "I supported him, and he laid his dear head—his beautiful face, more beautiful than ever, has grown so thin—on my shoulder, and remained a little while, saying: 'It is very comfortable so, dear child,' which made me so happy."

He had talked to her of his not being able to understand how she clung to the present, of his wish to do what was right while he lived, and of his still deeper wish that he should come to the calm and security of death. She watched his sinking with terror. Morning after morning she went to him. The room had a sad look of night watching—the candles burned down to their sockets. She

wrote afterwards, "Never can I forget how beautiful my darling looked lying there with his face lit up by the rising sun—his eyes unusually bright, gazing as it were on unseen objects, but not taking any notice of me."

The Queen watched him, hour after hour. A dusky hue came into his face and he folded his arms and arranged his hair, as though "he were preparing for another and greater journey." He called her "Good little wife," and he kissed her. She did not cry while she was beside him, but every hour or so, she would creep into the next room, in a "*terrible burst of misery.*" "The country; oh, the country," she cried. "I could perhaps bear my own misery, but the poor country."

While the Queen was out of the bedroom, Princess Alice leaned over her father. She whispered to Lady Augusta, "that is the death rattle," and went to bring her mother. The Queen knelt beside the bed and held her husband's hand. But it was already cold. The breathing grew fainter and fainter. "Oh, yes, this is death, I know it. I have seen this before," she whispered. She fell upon his dead body and called him by every endearing name. Then she sank back into the arms of her Ladies and they carried her into the next room.

For a moment the Queen lay there, crumpled and dazed. Then, as if some awful power had come to her, she sat up and asked for her children. They came, one by one, and she told them she would fight and that she would live for them and for her duty. She sent for the doctors and consoled them for their failure. Then she turned and found the Prince of Wales beside her. He threw himself into her arms and said that his whole life would be devoted to her comfort and to an endeavour to diminish her anguish.

Before long, she saw her Ministers. Her old enemy, Lord Palmerston, came, and when he saw her, sitting upon the sofa, fighting her agony, he "wept bitterly."

Five days afterwards, the bereaved Queen was taken to her quiet house in the Isle of Wight. For some time her Ministers and Ladies watched her anxiously, afraid lest she should lose her reason. The gardens of Osborne were stark and dead, for it was winter. The Queen looked out of the windows, over the expanse of cold earth, to the wind-troubled stretches of the Solent. The scene held the mirror up to her own desolation. The little

black-dressed figure, with what her uncomprehending children called her "sad-cap" on her head, was suddenly estranged from her people and from her own family. Her grief made her still more alone. "There is nobody to call me Victoria now," she cried. ". . . . The things of this life are of no interest to the Queen." Without her "dear angel" she had no wish to live.

February passed and the delicate changes of spring came to the gardens. The wind on the Solent was more gentle and sunlight came to the sullen winter tide. The trees he had planted were gay with the first pale buds of the new season. The Queen's sorrow did not abate with the change. She hung his portrait, wreathed with *immortelles*, over the empty pillow beside her: when her Prime Minister came to see her, she received him with the bust of Prince Albert on the table next to her. Sometimes she hung a wreath of flowers about the white marble throat. His image was in the bracelet upon her plump wrist. At Osborne, at Buckingham Palace, at Windsor and at Balmoral, his rooms were to remain as he had left them, his books in their place, his clothes ready for him to wear. She walked into the study where she had sat with him so often. She saw the books he had been reading when they were there only a few months before; the meticulously arranged lists and papers and the few wistful souvenirs of his boyhood. Nothing was to be touched. All, all was to be a memorial to him.

She might have paused in her grief to see her Ministers tapping their feet impatiently at her door; she might have been more conscious of the young children who were now doubly dependent upon her resources. There was the Civil War in America to keep the nation on tenterhooks and there was the disturbing figure of Garibaldi to draw the eyes of the people towards the Mediterranean. But the Queen turned her back on the living; she devoted her mind and her energies to the dead.

She wrote to Lord Derby, of Windsor, where she had once been so happy. Now, she said, the castle was a *living grave*. Every feeling was swallowed up in one of unbounded grief. "She feels," she wrote, "as though *her life* had ended on *that* dreadful day when she lost that bright Angel who was her idol, the life of her life: and the time seems to have passed like *one long, dark day!*"

"*She sees the trees budding, the days lengthen, the primroses*

coming out, but *she thinks* herself in the month of December . . . . she wastes and pines . . . . with a broken and bleeding heart, and with but one consolation—to *rejoin him again—never to part.*"

Eighteen days after Prince Albert's death, the Queen made her first entry in her Journal. She was already planning memorials for him. She wrote, "Went down to see the sketch for a statue of my beloved Albert in Highland dress." At Windsor his body was to be buried in a great romanesque mausoleum, brilliant with mosaics within, crowned by copper without. It was to be near to the pond upon which he had skated so elegantly in the first winters of their marriage. Four bronze angels would extend their wings to support his marble effigy upon the sarcophagus: a sarcophagus wide enough for her to join him when her unhappy life should end. Over the door of the mausoleum would be written, ". . . . Farewell, well beloved. Here, at last, I will rest with thee." In London, near to the Palace in Kensington where she was born, he was to be sculptured in gold, holding the catalogue of his wonderful exhibition, beneath a lofty canopy of unsurpassed, oriental-gothic beauty. Henry the Third's Chapel at Windsor, where Wolsey had planned to be buried, was to be transformed with mosaics and portraits of her children in marble: all in *his* memory. His statue was to rise in the public parks: never would the British people be allowed to forget him. When the Lord Mayor of London wrote, offering the memorial of the people, she said "yes," it could be built, providing it was "on a scale of sufficient grandeur." She wrote that his memorials should be "numberless."

The pitiless storms of winter were still moving about Osborne House when the Queen went out into the garden for the first time. For half an hour each day she walked among the leafless trees, supported by two of her Ladies. Her stumbling steps were watched anxiously by her servants from the windows. She already seemed to be bent and old and remote from them, behind the walls of her grief. She would go back to the house and to his room, to sit there alone in the icy twilight. She saw and spoke and moved like one in a dream. When Lord Canning died, soon after his wife and six months after her own bereavement, the Queen wrote to his sister: "How enviable to follow so soon the partner of your life! How I pray it may be God's will to let me follow mine soon."

Queen Victoria was forty-two years old when the Prince Consort died. Of her nine children, one was married and two were betrothed. Most of them were still young and the task of bringing them up might have helped the Queen to conquer her despair. But the troubles of the younger children were nothing to the anxiety she felt over the future of the Prince of Wales. She was confronted with her problem within a few days after the Prince Consort's death, when Lord Palmerston went to see her at Osborne and said that "*the difficulty of the moment*" was the Prince of Wales. With a flash of motherly loyalty, the Queen said that he was a very good and dutiful son, but when she recorded the interview in her Journal, she admitted that she "felt the same." Palmerston told her that it was important that the Prince should travel and that he should then marry.

The Queen suffered her first experience of loneliness as a Sovereign, for there was not one man in the country whom she trusted, as an adviser. In the old days, Lord Melbourne or the Duke of Wellington might have helped her; or Sir Robert Peel, in the later years when she came to like and to trust him. All these were gone now. Uncle Leopold was still in Brussels, but he was old, and the Queen was inclined to look upon his advice as interference. The once vigorous and ruthless Stockmar had also withdrawn. He was now a shade, retired to a humble life in Coburg. His hand had lost its cunning and his eyes were dim. There was not one man in England whom the Queen both loved and respected. At Palmerston's heels were Lord Russell, who was Foreign Minister, and Lord Derby, who was Leader of the Conservative Opposition. Neither of them inspired the Queen to more than official regard and respect. She could pour out her woe to them in italicised phrases, mixed up with her views upon Schleswig-Holstein and the American Civil War, but when it came to the cold questions of Government, she suspected their advice and she doubted their ability. Only the memory of her dead husband was to be allowed to influence her now: she was to be aware of his mind and conscious of his judgment in every hour of her widowed life. Aware of this

strength coming from the dead, she wrote to her Uncle, "No human power will make me swerve from what he decided and wished." This was a warning to Leopold, who had proffered his advice when the Prince died. "I am also determined," she added, "that no one person, may he be ever so good, ever so devoted, among my servants, is to lead or guide or dictate to me."

The Queen watched the affairs of the country with tear-stained eyes, but her sorrow was not to permit any abatement of her power. Lord Russell had sent a dispatch to the American Minister in London, without allowing her to see it first. She pounced upon him and a black-edged letter was sent from Osborne. "Lord Russell will perhaps take care," she wrote, "that the rule should not be departed from, viz. that no drafts should be sent without the Queen's having first seen them." Some of the spirit of her girlhood was coming back again, now that the Prince's restraining hand was not with her. She would think as he had thought, but the force of her decision was to be her own. The Queen used this will-power in planning the affairs of her son.

Ministers and newspapers came to resent the control which she exercised over him. He had one friend at Court, Lord Torrington, who broke all rules by writing letters to the editor of *The Times*, apprising him of what was happening within the Court. In one of his letters, Lord Torrington described the Prince as "singularly honest and truthful." "He deserves a little of her confidence," he wrote, "the pretence to consult him would have a great effect on his mind."

During these years of dominion over him, the Prince's affection for his mother never seemed to wane. He had great capacity for respect and he was instinctively loyal.

The Prince Consort had left two plans for his son's progress. He had wished him to travel in the Near East, with Dr. Arthur Stanley, and he had also wished him to marry Princess Alexandra of Denmark. The Queen set about fulfilling her husband's plans and neither her grief nor her loneliness deterred her from sending the Prince abroad. He left for Egypt and the Holy Land two months after his father's death.

On April 6th the Prince of Wales rode up the golden slopes into Jerusalem with Arthur Stanley as his guide. Stanley was a sincere,

devout man, and young people loved him. But he had begun upon the journey reluctantly. He had said "Yes," only because the Queen had assured him that the Prince Consort had chosen him. He had been weighed down by the story of frivolity and failure which had been poured into his ears. "I doubt whether I am the proper person," he pleaded. "I should not be a suitable companion for him."

The Queen's wish overruled Stanley's objections. He went alone as far as Egypt and when the Prince of Wales met him there, Stanley contemplated his charge and wrote to his sister, ". . . nothing can be worse than I have long ago anticipated . . . everything must be taken as part of an inevitable whole." After a few weeks had passed, with excursions into the desert, grand visits to Egyptian Princes, and donkey rides, Stanley still wrote of the Prince in depressed phrases. "It is hardly possible to over-estimate the difficulty of producing any impression on a mind with no previous knowledge or interest to be awakened . . . I cannot bring myself to pour out words into unwilling or indifferent ears."

Intimacy broke down a little of Stanley's prejudice and human nature won where intellectual responses failed. Stanley slowly came to judge the Prince, not as a bored visitor to the ruins of the Near East, but as a normal young Briton. With this closer view, the Prince was judged more pleasantly. "I certainly agree with the eulogies on his manners and from time to time he tells a good story well," Stanley wrote from Cairo. On another day, while they were floating down the Nile in the pleasant excitement of shooting crocodiles, stuffing birds, and landing to see the temples, Stanley watched the Prince again and he wrote, "H.R.H. is perfectly friendly and easy. He set his mind on my reading *East Lynne*, which I did, in three sittings yesterday."

They sat on the deck together, "the Heir of half the world," and the scholarly priest. Their talk was all of earthly things, a penetrating examination by the Prince on the merits of *East Lynne* and a confession that ruins were not interesting to him. When he was urged off the boat to see a temple, he "treated the pillars, and the sculptures . . . with the most well-bred courtesy, as if he were paying a visit to a high personage."

Stanley came to see that the Prince had a strong desire to be all

that was expected of him. He also came to understand the struggle between the Prince's nature and his duty to his mother. Stanley softened his judgment: "There is more in him than I thought. I do not at all despair . . ." he wrote from the Palace of the Citadel, where they were living in Egyptian splendour.

Early in April the cavalcade rode up from Jericho to Jerusalem. The way is from the deep shores of the Dead Sea, up through stark and lifeless mountains, to Bethany. Then to Jerusalem. Stanley made his most sincere plea for the Prince's interest as they approached the Holy City. They climbed up until they came to the Inn of the Good Samaritan which rises beside the parched, dusty road. Then up again, between the flanks of the bare mountains of Judæa, until, in the late afternoon, they came to Bethany. They were going by the way along which Jesus had entered Jerusalem. Stanley wrote of the afternoon:

"I then took my place close beside the Prince. Everyone else fell back by design or accident—and at the head of the cavalcade, we moved on towards the famous view. This was the one half-hour which throughout the journey I had determined to have alone with him—and I succeeded. I pointed out each stage of the triumphal entry—the 'fig-trees'—the 'stones,' the first sight of Jerusalem—the acclamations, the palms, the olive branches—the second sight, where 'He beheld the city and wept over it.'

"I turned round to call the attention of the rest of the party, and as I turned, I saw and bade the Prince look round to the only detail which would have been worth noticing on such an occasion—a flock of white sheep and black goats feeding on the mountain side, the framework of the great Parable delivered also from this hillside—on the Day of Judgment. The cavalcade moved on again—and I fell to the rear—feeling that I had at least done my best, though after, I felt as if my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth."

In the afternoon, when the air was cool and when the shadows were coming to the olive trees in the valleys about Jerusalem, Arthur Stanley would lead the Prince along the city walls from gate to gate, until they came to the beautiful and quiet place from

which they looked out to the Mount of Olives and down into the Garden of Gethsemane. After such a day, the Prince came to Stanley in his tent, when the evening silence had come to the little camp. Sitting with him, the Prince wrote down the names of all the places he had seen. As he walked out, he turned and stood still, framed in the door of the tent. He said, "in the most engaging manner," "You see that I am trying to do what I can to carry out what you said in your sermon, 'Gather up the fragments—'"

It might have been disappointing for Stanley to contemplate the faint intellectual response to his learning, but, as he wrote, "It was impossible not to like him."

The Prince returned to England on June 14th to the momentary delight of the Queen, for she thought him "improved, and looking so bright and healthy." Sixteen days afterwards he still pleased her and it seemed that they were coming nearer to the sympathy which might have strengthened them both. She wrote of him as "most affectionate, dutiful and amiable." But she admitted his merits because he obeyed her will: because he was "only anxious to do whatever his Mother and Father wished."

For a little time there was hope that the shadow of misunderstanding was passing. The Queen returned to Windsor. Again she clung to the tangible souvenirs of the dead Prince, leaving the door open between her room and his own, with strange and morbid devotion. But she paused in "the midst of her agony" to "thank God for the blessed change in her son." Lady Augusta Bruce wrote of him as "serious, wishing to do right, anxious to marry in March or April." Instead of "worry and distress" there was "love."

In celebration of his increased merits the Prince was to be given more freedom. The change was disturbed by the death of his Governor. General Bruce had guarded him well, but he was the Queen's appointed mentor. His death was a deep and personal sorrow, but the Prince might also have come to look upon it as a release from discipline, suitable to the adventure of acquiring Marlborough House in London and Sandringham House in the country. Here, indeed, were signs of freedom, with the stretches of Norfolk for his shooting and the spacious rooms of Marlborough House for his entertainments in town. But the Queen would have none of this. The General's death caused her to look about for still another

balanced man, to "keep him from doing what was hurtful to him, or unfit to his position, and who would be responsible to me." The man chosen was General Knollys, afterwards Sir W. T. Knollys, a soldier in the autumn of his sixty-fifth year, secure from flippancy and certain to curb the Prince's taste for "worldly, frivolous, gossiping kind of conversation." The Queen sent the Prince a "little sketch" of what she wished him to do between October and the time of his marriage. All that remained now was to see that his married life was so faithful to her plan that, in the event of her death, the Prince would carry on his father's tradition and not create his own. She signed her letter of instruction, "Ever your affectionate and unhappy Mama, V.R."

In September, the Queen made her first journey abroad since the Prince Consort's death. The progress was slow and sad. She paused in Brussels to stay with King Leopold, and there the beautiful Danish Princess was brought to her. The Queen was solaced and pleased, for Princess Alexandra "looked lovely, in a black dress, nothing in her hair, and curls on either side, which hung over her shoulders, her hair turned back off her beautiful forehead." "Her whole appearance," wrote the Queen, "was one of the greatest charm, combined with simplicity and perfect dignity."

Six days after meeting Princess Alexandra in Brussels, Queen Victoria went to a castle near the Thuringian forest. Here she lived within sight of the places Prince Albert had known as a child. She walked out among the peasants, just as she had walked with *him* on the pleasant, first occasion when he took her to his home. Here life was simple and free from the mighty affairs of England. It was a pilgrimage of painful recollection for her, since every turret and stream, every light that fell upon the market-place or about the lofty castle was associated with him. Again grief overwhelmed her.

On September 9th the Queen received a telegram from her son. The day before he had written, "Now I will take a walk with Princess Alexandra in the garden and in three-quarters of an hour I will take her into the grotto, and there I will propose, and I hope it will be to everybody's satisfaction." He had proposed and been accepted and now he wished for his mother's "consent and blessing." They were given readily, since his engagement was in obedience to her will. Princess Alexandra had celebrated her engagement

by walking with the Prince over the battlefield of Waterloo. He hurried to his mother in Coburg with all the zest and delight of a lover. Lady Augusta, who attended the Queen, observed him without sentimental delusions and said that he was truly "in love." He was "too tender and so very, very dear," facing her with a love letter of twelve pages, "held crumpled up for fear that the zephyrs should blow upon it."

"I feel a new interest in everything, and somebody to live for," the Prince wrote to the widow of his old Governor. To a still closer friend he confided, "I indeed now know what it is to be really happy."

## *Chapter Twenty-eight*

1862-1866

The Queen's daughters and Ladies sometimes dared to show their anxiety over her judgment and the dangers of her incessant grief. Princess Alice had written to her, after the Prince Consort's death: "Try and gather in the few bright things you have remaining," and then, "You have the privilege . . . in your exalted position of doing good and living for others." The Princess added, "Forgive me, darling Mama, if I speak so openly." Lady Augusta Bruce, who was especially close to the Court during this year, wrote of her "feeling that the very good qualities" of the Queen might cause "evil results" and that the "honesty, the straightforwardness, the frankness, the impulsiveness, all held in check by Him" when he was alive, might lead to her being "misunderstood." But Queen Victoria was not likely to place faith in a woman's advice, and she continued her lonely way.

The two plans which the Prince Consort had left to Queen Victoria were now complete. Her son had been to the Holy Land and he was engaged to be married. Her next duty was to train Princess Alexandra in the way she should go. The Queen wished her influence to be the strongest in preparing the Princess, so she arranged that she should come from Denmark to Osborne upon a visit. But she arranged also that the Prince of Wales should remain abroad.

As early as March, those who were near to the Queen observed a change—still "the look of sorrow and suffering," but there was also "calm decision and high resolve and energy." Her son was to be married on the tenth of the month, and the Queen threw herself into the preparations with moderate zest. She had observed Princess Alexandra closely; the "serious, pious books" beside her bed, "all most read, underlined old copies." There had been many quiet talks together at Osborne, and the result was satisfying. The Princess was anxious to learn the Queen's tastes and interests and she was sensible of the immense benefit it was to be quiet with her, *tête-à-tête*. There was no thought "but of *Him*" and she was "anxious to improve Herself in every way to be of use to *Him*." The Queen was also pleased. "I am sure she will do what is right fearlessly," she wrote.

The marriage scene in Saint George's Chapel was magnificent. The beauty and nobility of the country waited; a tide of blazing uniforms, satin dresses and diamonds, beneath the soaring stone arches, the richly coloured banners of the Knights, and the dark oak stalls of the choir. There was one moment of astonishment when Lord Palmerston took out his comb and combed his hoary whiskers. And there was a moment of special beauty when Lady Spencer came in, wearing a dark cerulean gown covered with magnificent lace which had belonged to Marie Antoinette. When all were seated in their stalls, there was silence. Then, like the moving crest of a wave, the diamond tiaras bowed—the Queen appeared in the high, oak closet of Catherine of Aragon, on the north side of the altar. In this pageant of colour she alone wore the black streamers of widowhood. "At the first blast of the trumpets, she quivered all over and you could see the working of her face." When Princess Beatrice came, the baby of the bridal procession, the Queen looked down and smiled. Then the bridegroom walked slowly towards the altar over the black stone slab which marked the grave of Charles the First. The trumpets sounded three times, and the bride entered. Then the sun burst forth and its rays fell on the Queen's white cap. As the organ pealed forth the first anthem, to Prince Albert's own music, the Queen raised her eyes upwards and sat as if transfixed. Never once did she falter in her resolve.

Arthur Stanley was amazed at the composure of the bridegroom. He said to himself, "Can this be the boy of last year on the Nile? Can this be the frolicsome creature, for whom all our anxiety was that this marriage should take place, and now at last it is come?"

As the Prince put the ring on the bride's finger the guns were fired, and somebody who looked up to the Queen in that moment said that she was very much agitated, "as if each one went through her." But still she did not falter. She hurried back to the Castle when all was over, and waited for the bride and bridegroom at the top of the grand staircase. When they came, she held them, locked in her arms and, as one of the Ladies wrote, she led them upstairs, "with that wonderful grace and dignity we know."

The Queen went from one guest to another, commanding this one for his gallantry and that one for her magnificence. But when the bride and bridegroom had driven away, the bride in a white

velvet dress and ermine coat, the Queen left the Castle and the tumult. She went down the shaded walk to Frogmore. There, in the quiet gardens where her mother had walked, near to the cedar-tree under which they used to drink their tea, she found the mausoleum. There she was alone.

There was to be one more unhappy reminder of all that had been, in July, when Stockmar died. The pitiful state of the Queen's loneliness was revealed as never before. She wrote to the Queen of Prussia, "With every loss I grow poorer, my poor heart more broken, and must withdraw once more into its inmost recesses, where it languishes in grief. Oh, how bitter, how hot are the tears that I often pour forth in the evening in his room, kneeling beside his chair! How fervently do I implore his aid, and how I wring my hands towards heaven and cry aloud: 'Oh, God have pity, let me go soon! Albert, Albert, where art thou?'"

The marriage of Princess Alexandra was not popular in Prussia, where Bismarck and his Government saw dangers in a close alliance between England and their little northern neighbour. But more sturdy problems occupied Bismarck and the other powerful men of Europe towards the close of 1863. There were to be three years of distress. First came Poland's struggle to be free of Russia and then Austria's fears when she suddenly realised Prussia's growing power. However much the Queen doted upon her bereavement and the memorials, which Gladstone gloomily said "covered the land," she did not allow power to slip from her fingers, nor one opportunity for influence to pass. She took definite stands in both problems. She sided with Bismarck, who believed that Poland's oppression under the Russians was no more severe than she deserved. Palmerston and Lord Russell were more prudent and they favoured Poland's cause. When the battery of her Ministers was too much for her, the Queen was able to draw upon Prince Albert's judgment as if he were alive and still at her side. He had left many memoranda for her guidance, and she was able to abash Palmerston or Lord Russell by quoting from the opinions of her "dear angel."

The Queen found her support and help in regard to Prussia's ambitions in remembering the Prince Consort's view. She wrote to Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg, "I know that our dear angel Albert

always regarded a strong Prussia as a necessity, for which, therefore, it is a sacred duty for me to work." Her opinions were not wholly reasonable, for she also said that Prussia was in a "sad state" and that the King made "one quite miserable" since he was "bent on self-ruin."

In the autumn, the Queen went to Coburg. For a day or two she embraced her grief again, but she used the occasion to make one magnificent effort to keep peace in Europe.

While she was resting at Rosenau, with the placid scene of autumn and the harvesters about her, there was a great Congress of reigning Princes at Frankfurt. The fissure between Prussia and the Southern Catholic countries was widening, and the King of Prussia had refused to attend the Congress. The Emperor of Austria therefore presided over the meetings. Alarmed by the estrangement between the two sovereigns, the Queen conquered her depression and attempted the rôle of peacemaker. For the first time she tried to impose her influence, alone, upon the other rulers in Europe, without her husband or her Ministers, and without the advice of her Uncle Leopold. "How beloved Albert, with his wise views and counsels, is missed at such a time!" she wrote.

First she induced the King of Prussia to come to Rosenau. The interview was doomed from the beginning for Bismarck had whispered in the King's ear, and he came with prejudices against the Queen's good intentions. She wrote in her memorandum:

"I . . . . said that I must be allowed to make one observation, which was, how earnestly I hoped that Prussia and Austria would go together; to which the King replied: 'But how?' It had been made quite impossible for him.

" . . . . He saw that there was pre-determination on the part of Austria to ruin Prussia, and she had so contrived it, that the odium fell now upon him of having destroyed the unity of Germany. Her conduct had been most false, he repeated. . . . The King added that great efforts were made by the Austrians to increase the power of the Catholic Church, and that swarms of priests had arrived in the neighbourhood of Frankfurt, trying to influence the lower orders, in every direction, in favour of Austria.

".... In taking leave, the King's last words were: 'I recommend my interests to your care.' To which I replied, he might rely upon me with certainty."

Three days afterwards, the Emperor of Austria went to see the Queen in Coburg. This second interview was in Ehrenburg Castle: in the room in which Prince Albert was confirmed: the room in which Louise had danced when she came to Coburg as a bride. The Emperor "was very civil." With the diligence and prudence learned from her husband, the Queen hurried back to Rosenau after seeing him and wrote a memorandum:

".... the Emperor said to me how glad he was that our Governments were on so friendly a footing, which I naturally reciprocated. .... I then said that the present moment was one of great importance for Germany, and that I trusted it would lead to unity. To which he replied he hoped so too, but Prussia was a great difficulty."

The Queen told the Emperor that she trusted "there was no disposition to lower Prussia, for that naturally Prussia and Austria must go together," to which the Emperor answered, "that no one dreamed in Germany of lowering Prussia, which was an impossibility, but that at Berlin great pretensions were raised."

Queen Victoria had attempted the impossible in supposing that she could reconcile the Emperor to Prussia's ambitions. But her effort proved what the later story confirmed, that however much she shunned the Courts and more superficial ceremonies of her position, she never allowed her grief to stand between her and what she considered to be her duty to the Crown, to the people, and to her relationship with the other sovereigns of Europe. A few weeks afterwards, in a fit of depression, the Queen wrote, "No respect is paid to *my* opinion now...." But this was not true. Lord Granville had been at hand, although not present, when the Queen spoke to the King and to the Emperor. When he read the Queen's memoranda, he said that he could not admit that the Queen had any right to feel anything but perfect self-confidence as to the perfect judgment and tact with which she conducted the interviews.

Princess Alexandra was gracious and beautiful, but her conquests were made with her heart more than with her mind. Hans Christian Andersen used to tell her fairy stories when she was a child. Excited by his world of make-believe, Princess Alexandra would play among the trees with her sisters and one of their favourite games had been to "wish." One day, Princess Dagmar said that she wished for power and influence. She became Empress of Russia. All that little Princess Alexandra had asked was that she "should like to be loved." Such gentle qualities did not give the young Prince of Wales the kind of support which he needed and he still fought a lonely fight, even when he came to the independence of married life at Marlborough House and Sandringham.

Now that he was married, the Prince made some attempts to fulfil the demands made upon him, but his efforts at action were curbed as much as his lethargy had been censured. He asked his mother to make the Lord Mayor of London a Baronet, because of the joyous reception the people had given him and his bride. The Queen said "No." Only the reception of a *Sovereign* merited such an honour. When he showed his interest in affairs by going to the House of Lords, she demurred again. It must not be too often.

The letter from the Queen to her son, when his first baby was born, began: ". . . This dream is one which I like to dwell on, though it did not, could not bring back my Angel, and I am *ever, ever* lonely. . . . I can't say *how* I love her [Princess Alexandra], how glad I shall be to do anything for that sweet dear creature. . . . I wish now to say a few words again about the *names, sponsors, and christening*. . . . I think I shall be able to be present, and hold the dear baby myself, D.V., which, trying though it will be, I *wish to do*.

" . . . Respecting your own names, and the conversation we had, I wish to repeat, that it was beloved Papa's wish, as well as mine, that you should be called by both, when you became King, and it would be impossible to drop your Father's. It would be monstrous, and *Albert alone*, as you truly and amiably say, would *not do*, as there can be only one *ALBERT!*"

The Prince's answer was short and to the point. ". . . Regarding the possibility of my ever filling that high position, which God grant may be far, very far distant, I quite understand your wishes about my bearing my two names, although no English Sovereign

has ever done so yet, and you will agree with me that it would not be pleasant to be like 'Louis Napoleon,' 'Victor Emmanuel,' 'Charles Albert,' etc., although no doubt there is no absolute reason why it should not be so. . . ."

There were many instructions from Windsor, but the Prince was not allowed to take any part in public affairs. In the end, *The Times* took up his cause. The editor, J. T. Delane, was a friend of both Lady Ely and Lord Torrington, and he still received secret communications from Windsor. Indeed, Lord Torrington wrote his reports to Delane upon Windsor Castle note-paper, and signed himself "Your Windsor Special." This irregular correspondence between courtier and editor became the inspiration of a plot to help the Prince to establish his position and increase his popularity.

Everybody was enchanted by the Prince of Wales. His parties were amusing and he was already releasing the fetters which had been upon London society for twenty years. When he received three thousand people at a levée, in his mother's name, they declared him to be most cordial—not in the least like his stiff father. The editor of *The Times* responded to Lord Torrington's appeal from Windsor and, in an article, he said that the time had come for entrusting the Prince with some of the duties appropriate to his place in the State. "There are many public or semi-public duties which no one else can perform as well, and some, perhaps, which no one else, under a monarchy like our own, can perform at all. . . . The English people will naturally look to the Prince of Wales to give appropriate expressions to their feelings. We do not believe that they will be disappointed, and we feel sure that His Royal Highness, who has won golden opinions as the guest of foreign Sovereigns, will know how to greet the friends of England in his own country."

This first hint from Delane was mild. Lord Torrington observed the Queen at Windsor and wrote to him, "I think your Prince of Wales article has done some good. The Queen feels that you have been very kind, and really, as no one dares to tell her the truth, it is fortunate *you* are able to do so and to be listened to also." This correspondence had been before the Prince's marriage. Delane waited two years before he openly attacked the Queen, this time basing his complaint upon her retirement behind the grey walls of Windsor. From morning to night she wrote at her desk—long,

frigid letters to Lord Palmerston and reproofs for Lord Russell. The stream of correspondence was tremendous, but when her work was ended, the Queen became a lonely widow once more. She knelt beside "that bed . . . in an agony of loneliness, grief and despair. . . ."

According to his biographer, Delane often announced as a fact in *The Times*, what he hoped to bring about. He played this little editorial trick on, of all days, April 1st. "Her Majesty's loyal subjects," he printed, "will be very pleased to hear that their Sovereign is about to break her protracted seclusion. Various announcements encourage the hope that not only will Buckingham Palace resume its place in the world of life, but that Her Majesty will herself appear as its mistress." Delane dared the Queen's anger. "They who would isolate themselves from the world and its duties," he wrote, "must cease to know and to care, as well as to act, and be content to let things take their course. This in effect they cannot do; this they never do; and the only result is a struggle in which they neither live nor die—neither live as they wish, in the past, nor do their duty in the working world."

With hasty judgment and fine courage, the Queen wrote a letter to *The Times*. General Grey was sent off to London from Windsor with the letter, which was unsigned but in the Queen's own handwriting. It was addressed to Delane. The pathetic plea appeared on April 6th.

"An erroneous idea seems generally to prevail, and has latterly found frequent expression in the newspapers, that the Queen is about to resume the place in society which she occupied before her great affliction; that is, that she is about again to hold Levées and Drawing-rooms in person, and to appear as before at Court balls, concerts, etc. This idea cannot be too explicitly contradicted.

"The Queen heartily appreciates the desire of her subjects to see her, and whatever she *can* do to gratify them in this loyal and affectionate wish she *will* do. Whenever any real object is to be attained by her appearing on public occasions, any national interest to be promoted, or anything to be encouraged which is for the good of her people, her Majesty will not shrink, as she has not

shrunk, from any personal sacrifice or exertion, however painful.

"But there are other and higher duties than those of mere representation which are now thrown upon the Queen, alone and unassisted—duties which she cannot neglect without injury to the public service, which weigh unceasingly upon her, overwhelming her with work and anxiety.

"The Queen has laboured conscientiously to discharge those duties till her health and strength, already shaken by the utter and ever-abiding desolation which has taken the place of her former happiness, have been seriously impaired.

"To call upon her to undergo, in addition, the fatigue of those mere State ceremonies which can be equally well performed by other members of her family is to ask her to run the risk of entirely disabling herself for the discharge of those other duties which cannot be neglected without serious injury to the public interests.

"The Queen will, however, do what she can—in the manner least trying to her health, strength, and spirits—to meet the loyal wishes of her subjects, to afford that support and countenance to society, and to give that encouragement to trade which is desired of her.

"More the Queen *cannot* do; and more the kindness and good feeling of her people will surely not exact from her."

Delane waited until the end of the year (December 15th) before he replied, with his editor's "last word":

"In all bereavements there is a time when the days of mourning should be looked upon as past. The living have their claims as well as the dead; and what claims can be more imperative than those of a great nation and the society of one of the first European capitals? . . . No reigning house can afford to confirm in their views those who suggest that the Throne is only an antiquarian relic and royalty itself a ceremony. . . . It is impossible for a recluse to occupy the British throne without a gradual weakening of that authority which the Sovereign has been accustomed to exert. . . . For the sake of the Crown as well as of the public, we would therefore beseech Her Majesty to return to the personal

exercise of her exalted functions. It may be that in time London may accustom itself to do without the palace, but it is not desirable that we should attain that point of republican simplicity. For every reason we trust that now that three years have elapsed, and every honour that affection and gratitude could pay to the memory of the Prince Consort has been offered, Her Majesty will think of her subjects' claims and the duties of her high station, and not postpone them longer to the indulgence of an unavailing grief."

The newspapers were not alone—the once whispered suggestion that the Queen would abdicate in favour of her son became public chatter. The Paris newspapers spoke of this so openly that men of Lord Howden's calm judgment began to think there might be something in it. He wrote to Lord Clarendon that it would have been well, "for her own interest, happiness and *reputation*, to have abdicated on the day her son came of age. She would then," he said, "have left a great name and great regret."

The people were becoming impatient of a mysterious, withdrawn figure who gave them none of the glamour which they expected from royalty. Gossip took on the colour of invention and *The Times* published a paragraph announcing that people employed at Woolwich were to be arrested if they looked out of the windows at the Queen as she passed in her carriage. Mrs. Bruce took the paragraph to the Queen, who was indignant. Again she sought reparation and she sent General Grey to the War Office to enquire into the story. This time he was persuaded not to go to Delane, and the stupid rumour was allowed to grow into a fabulous story. Mrs. Bruce wrote, "During my afternoon in London . . . I found people so furious with the Queen that I am quite unhappy about it. . ." The Queen did not seem to comprehend the fading of her popularity. At Frogmore, on the anniversary which was causing less sympathy and more bitterness among her people, she went again to a short service in the mausoleum—"which we all deprecate," wrote Lady Augusta. The sermon was to be published. "Why?"

## *Chapter Twenty-nine*

1863-1866

The Prince Consort's opinion that his eldest son had "no interest for things, but all the more for persons," remained true after the Prince of Wales was married. This interest "for persons" established the Prince of Wales's popularity from the first day when he became host at Marlborough House. His charm was so stimulating to other people that even painters and literary men, with whom he had little in common, were delighted by him.

Holman Hunt has left a pleasant picture of the Prince of Wales in the early 'sixties. Hunt had painted the scene of London Bridge during the royal wedding celebrations and the Prince wished to see the picture. He went, apparently, to Holman Hunt's studio. Hunt had included in the crowd the face of Combe, painted no larger than a sixpence, and lost in the scene. "I know that man," said the Prince, "I have seen him in the hunting-field with Lord Macclesfield's hounds. He rides a clever pony about fourteen hands high, and his beard blows over his shoulders. He is the Head of a house of Oxford, and not a college"—as he went on following the trace in his mind—"but I'll tell you—Yes—I remember now—it's the Printing Press, and he rides in a red jacket. Am I right?" And he even remembered the man's name. This memory for faces and talent for reminiscence graced all the occasions of his life, to the end.

Seldom have sons been less like their fathers than in the last four generations of the Royal Family. King Edward had risen, an eager, pleasure-loving youth, in the wake of his calm, conscientious father. He was more lenient in judging both his own morals and those of his friends. A fine, unsuspecting nature is revealed in a letter which he wrote to Lord Granville, when he was a little older. "I may have many faults," he said; "no one is more alive to them than I am; but I have held one great principle in life from which I will never waver, and that is loyalty to one's friends, and defending them if possible when they get into trouble. One often gets into scrapes in consequence, but I consider the risk worth running."

In spite of the Queen's disapproval, the Prince created his own society—a society which eschewed the conventions and barriers

which had been set up by his mother and father. A friend of Lord Clarendon wrote, early in 1866, that Sandringham was "not at all a nice young Court." The Prince frequented the houses of the opulent and, with wistful glances of reproof and regret from the stauncher social dic-hards, London society became more rich and a little less well-bred. In a few years' time, brewers and actresses were to be among the Prince's friends—Jews and Americans dined with him and he dined with them. No prince before him had been where he had been—America, Canada, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Palestine and Syria. He was a cosmopolitan; he was the first prince to belong to the world and to be tangible to the Empire. The broader field was reflected in the society he chose. In 1864 he became a member of the Jockey Club, and he later raced his own horses. He created the programme for fashionable society—Epsom, Doncaster and Ascot shone again. He greeted foreign princes on the steps of the Yacht Squadron at Cowes, he gave a lead to the season on the Riviera, and, after a few years, he awakened Homburg and made it famous through his patronage. He rebuked the Lord Chamberlain for excising the daring indiscretions in Mlle. Schneider's performance of *La Belle Hélène* and he smoked cigars before ladies. The older ones were shocked, remembering the day when their menfolk withdrew to the kitchen and smoked up the chimney lest the abomination should pollute the house. The Prince travelled in hired cabs; he frequented the Garrick Club and the Savage. Every now and then he enjoyed a harmless dalliance in Paris, where restaurants and dishes were named after him.

Queen Victoria represented and sympathised with the point of view of the middle classes. She appreciated their limitations and their instinct for safety and she allowed herself to be a shrine to which the gossipers brought their stories. She remonstrated with her son and in a letter to him she likened the English society, with which he enjoyed his leisure, to the *noblesse* of France on the eve of the French Revolution. His reply was courageous: "They are the mainstay of the country," he wrote, and he suggested that the alternative would be Mr. Bright's idea, of a Sovereign and the people, and no class between. But the note of the conversation at Marlborough House was far from being merely boisterous and ephemeral. The Prince

enjoyed his rich and amusing friends, but he also retained friendships with men "of the sedatest vocations and character." He slowly gained influence and power through his social life. Soldiers met politicians at Sandringham: sportsmen met professional citizens and found new and better ways of using their leisure and their money. The rich were drawn into philanthropy, and, for the good of both, the scholarly and the merely human found themselves at the same table.

The Prince had great talents as a host; his Princess was his less obtrusive, charming and beautiful companion. The Prince and the Princess established their own kingdom in London. The Welshman, Brinley Richards, composed *God Bless the Prince of Wales* in 1862. Slowly, it came to be sung all over the country.

Queen Victoria lacked the creative talents of the Prince Consort, but she possessed another quality which was rich in him: the balance of sanity which made it possible for her to calm the agitated and to be non-committal with the sour and sullen. Every apparent error must be judged in the light of her final achievement: the establishing of Constitutional Monarchy, during a century in which Government passed from the few into the hands of the many. Between 1832 and 1884, the voters in the country were increased by three and a half millions. In almost every other country this experiment in representative government and Constitutional Monarchy failed. In spite of the years when she was unpopular, Queen Victoria's character and power contributed very definitely to the success of the experiment in England. She

. . . . Kept her throne unshaken still,  
Based broad upon the people's will.

One of the Queen's most alarming problems in judgment came with the invasion of Schleswig and Holstein by Prussia, in 1864. Denmark and Germany both claimed the two Baltic states. The Queen had already declared her German sympathies and she was stirred, every now and then, by a letter from her daughter in Prussia. In June of the previous year, the Princess had written, "Thank God, I was born in England." But the chameleon qualities of the Coburgs were strong in her. Her father had been able to "make a fist" at Germany after he had been in England a few

years, and King Leopold had been able to forget his Protestant upbringing and become a Belgian and a Catholic. In the same way the Princess Royal soon became intoxicated with the Prussian spirit. When the German soldiers invaded the northern states, she suddenly forgot her pride in England. "I would almost quarrel with my real and best friends in dear England rather than forget that I belong to this country, the interest of which I have so *deeply* at heart," she wrote to her mother in May of 1864. The comments in the British Parliament made her livid, and she thought that the British newspapers were "absurd, unjust and rude." "I can see nothing inhuman or improper in any way in [the] bombardment of Sonderburg: it was necessary and we hope it has been useful." With some justification, the Princess wondered what Palmerston, who was the ringleader in the agitation against the Prussian spirit, would say if "*we*" enquired about Admiral Kuper's<sup>1</sup> "not so intensely scrupulous" bombardments in Japan. Her letter to the Queen was a fine trumpeting of Prussia's anger over "the continued meddling and interfering of England in other people's affairs."

The Queen looked up from the Crown Princess's letters to see her Danish daughter-in-law, wistfully conscious that her country was not in favour. News came from Marlborough House that Princess Alexandra did not sleep at night for distress over her father and his people. There was a third complication: Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell were indignant at Prussia's ruthlessness. Palmerston's blood boiled at the suggestion that the Austrian fleet might sail up past the English coast to capture Copenhagen, and the British fleet was summoned home in the face of such dangers. Even this action made the Queen anxious. On his death-bed, the Prince Consort had saved Britain from war with America over the Trent case. The Queen remembered this and she raised her hand against the impetuosity of the Ministers. The fleet might be summoned home, she agreed. But there were to be "no more orders" without consulting her—"no threats."

<sup>1</sup> During 1863 and 1864, Admiral Sir A. L. Kuper commanded the attacks upon Japanese positions. In 1863 the palace of the Prince of Satsuma was shelled and half the town of Kagoshima was burned. In 1864, when the Diamo of Nagato closed the Straits of Simonoseki against foreign ships, Kuper again commanded the reprisals when all the forts were silenced and stormed.

The Queen's calm decisions kept her aloof from the extravagant excitement. She had an unerring sense of what was right and a cold disregard for passing fancies. She was delighted, some years later, when Lord Halifax was talking to her of the mistakes made in foreign affairs under Lord Russell and Lord Palmerston. He said to her that it "was not to be told what good" she had done in that time "by checking their reckless course." He was quite vehement with the Queen and said that he would repeat this "to the world at large." She was similarly calm now that Prussia and Denmark were at war. She wrote to Lord Russell saying that she would never, if she could prevent it, allow this country to be involved in a war in which *no English* interests were concerned. Lord Russell replied next day ". . . if English honour were to be concerned, Your Majesty would no doubt feel bound to defend it." The Queen did not pause before sending her reproof. "She must observe that she does not require to be reminded of the honour of England, which touches her more nearly than anyone else." Then came the inevitable sentence about the "one wise, far-seeing and *impartial* head who would have guided them."

The Ministers sometimes became a little tired of Prince Albert's memory: it was galling to be reminded, every day, that the only great man in England was dead.

A few of the newspapers pilloried the Queen over her Prussian sympathies and the Ministers fussed and sent her the cuttings. Her daughter fussed, too, and she wrote excited letters to her mother. The Queen, the object of so many attacks, was the only person not disturbed. "She must be content to see unjust remarks in obscure newspapers and must continue to disregard them," she wrote. When an armistice was declared the Queen urged that the discussions between the Prussians and the Danes should not be hurried. "By giving time," she said, "the passions on all sides will be calmed and cooled down."

The first important division of opinion between the Queen and the Prince of Wales was over the war between Prussia and Denmark. The Prince Consort, in contemplating his son's marriage with a Danish Princess, had said, "We take the Princess, but *not* her relations." Such cold diplomacy was well enough before the wedding, but the Prince Consort had not taken his son's character

into consideration in thus setting a limitation on his sympathies. The sight of his wife's distress over the war unnerved the Prince. He was chivalrous enough to care deeply when she was distressed and the effect was natural. He developed sympathy, through her, for her people. He withheld his pro-Danish opinions from the public. The Queen had already been reprimanded in the newspapers for abetting the Prussians and it would have been fantastic had he declared his allegiance to the opposite camp. The Queen saw this danger and decided to warn her son. She chose the strange course of asking Lord Clarendon to speak for her. She pointed out, in the letter of instruction to Lord Clarendon, that the Prince of Wales was "bound by so many ties of blood to Germany," and then added, rather callously, that he was bound "only quite lately, by marriage, to Denmark." Lord Clarendon went to the Prince of Wales and found him "very reasonable and right-minded," but he nevertheless "heartily sympathised with the Princess" and there could be no doubt as to the "feeling he must be known to entertain." This was the beginning of a great change in the English Royal Family: the slow driving of the wedge between Prussia and England. The Prince continued, after this time, to draw away more and more from friendship with Prussia. His comment on his sister's sympathies was apt. He thought her "too German in England and too English in Germany."

During the interview with Lord Clarendon, the Prince made his first definite effort to play the part of international mediator. He said "that occasions might arise when he could be of more use than [the British Minister in Denmark] in making known to the King and Queen [of Denmark] the wishes" of the British Government, and that it would be "a great satisfaction to him to be so employed." This intrusion was condemned by the Queen. She communicated with her son through a secretary and a Minister, and said that the Prince's offer "must be accepted with *extreme caution.*" In June the Prince made another attempt. He spoke to Lord Russell with a view to seeing copies of some of the dispatches. The Ministers were on the Prince's side, and they saw the advantages which would come by broadening his knowledge and his interest in the government of the country. Lord Russell said that he felt that the Queen might "with advantage from time to

time direct that dispatches of interest might be sent to the Prince of Wales." The Queen was sympathetic, but she said that she could not help "objecting to the *principle*, which would be thus admitted, of separate and independent communication between the Prince of Wales and her Government."

No problem of the Queen's reign shows how conscientiously she viewed her trust as sovereign more than the freedom of the Church of Scotland. In November of 1866, she wrote a letter to the Dean of Windsor which shines as a proof of her devotion to the principles of constitutional rule. The Archbishop of Canterbury had countenanced and encouraged an Episcopalian movement in Scotland, and Dr. Macleod, the Queen's "liberal-minded" and "thoroughly Christian" friend, had come to Windsor to protest against a campaign which the Queen described as "*most serious*, and indeed *alarming* to the safety of the Church of Scotland." Many members of the Scottish aristocracy had already been converted from Presbyterianism to Episcopalianism. The Queen wrote of the disadvantages of such changes, "establishing a religion for the rich, and another for the poor, and thus alienating the people from their superiors, and producing a want of sympathy between them." The Archbishop of Canterbury had himself been to Scotland and he had permitted his Bishops to speak of "*the Church*" implying that the Scottish Establishment was "*no Church*," and her Sacraments not to be considered as such. Then come the phrases which reveal the Queen's conscience. ". . . . the Queen takes a solemn engagement, on her accession, to maintain the Established Church of Scotland, and any attempt to subvert it is *contrary* to Law, and indeed subversive of that respect for *existing Institutions* which, above all, the Archbishops and Bishops *ought* to do *everything* to maintain, and she *will* maintain it.

"But, quite apart from this, the Queen considers this movement as *most* mischievous. The Presbyterian Church is essentially *Protestant*, and, as such, *most* valuable. The Reformation in this country was *never* fully completed, and had we applied the pruning knife more severely, we should *never* have been exposed to the dangers to which the Church of England is *now* exposed, and for which the Queen thinks it will be *absolutely* necessary to take some measures.

"The Queen feels, *more strongly* than words *can* express, the duty which is imposed upon her and her family, to maintain the *true* and *real principles* and *spirit* of the *Protestant* religion; for her family was brought over and placed on the throne of these realms *solely* to maintain it; and the Queen will *not* stand the attempts made to destroy the simple and truly Protestant faith of the Church of Scotland, and to bring the Church of England as near the Church of Rome as they possibly can."

### *Chapter Thirty*

The relationship between Queen Victoria and her Scottish servants has provided much fanciful gossip among people who do not understand the deep, personal devotion which can exist between servant and mistress in Scotland, where class distinctions are not as pernicious as in England. There has been a general rumour, persisting to this day, that the Queen's devotion to her personal attendant, John Brown, was emotional. It has even been said that they were married in the Scottish Church. Observation of the Queen's character proves this to be both ridiculous and impossible.<sup>1</sup>

Queen Victoria's Court was made up of people of definite character and high moral courage. It was part of her greatness that she never attracted second-rate people about her. Women like Jane Lady Churchill, Jane, Marchioness of Ely, Lady Augusta Stanley and Mrs. Robert Bruce knew her from hour to hour. They would have retired from the Court, upon the force of their own characters, if the rumour had been true.

It is still necessary to understand why the Queen allowed Brown to become such an intimate servant. All people are unreasonable upon some points. Queen Victoria was sometimes exasperating to her family and to her Court in her treatment of servants. The hedged-in life and the estrangement from ordinary friendships which is the lot of Royal persons offers a little more help in understanding this peculiar obsession. To Queen Victoria, servants could do no wrong. One recalls the early story of the drunken footman at

<sup>1</sup> About a year before the death of the late Lord Davidson, the author walked with him through a beautiful park in the Thames valley. In talking of the relationship between the Queen and John Brown, Lord Davidson said that it was unwise and that it was a source of concern to all those who were close to the Queen, but that one had only to know the Queen personally to realise how innocent it was.

After Brown died, the Queen wrote a monograph upon him and wished to publish it. The Queen consulted Lord Davidson and he told her that if she did publish the book, he would resign from the Deanery. His was an uncompromising honesty which would not be intimidated by the Royal judgment. The book was not published. As Dean of Windsor, coming into the daily life of the Court, a man of Lord Davidson's character would not have tolerated the relationship which has been so foolishly suggested in the pages of some of the Queen's biographers.

Windsor who imperilled the Castle by dropping a lighted lamp down the steps when he stumbled. The Master of the Household had long tried to be rid of the man, for he was a sot. A long report was written upon his drunkenness and it was sent to the Queen. She returned it, with the two words "Poor man" written in the margin. The drunkenness and pilfering among the servants at Windsor exasperated those in authority, but the Queen would never act when the complaints were brought to her. It was an amazing, unreasonable and odd indulgence which helps in understanding the Queen's acceptance of John Brown's candour and simplicity. In some ways his character was the same as that of his mistress.

"She is absolutely the most truthful woman I have ever known," John Bright said of the Queen. John Brown was similarly blessed. Once a lady of noble birth and exalted name went to the Palace, and somebody asked where she was. Brown answered, "There's the woman you want." The "woman" heard him and complained to the Queen that John Brown had insulted her. The Queen answered, "Well, but after all, wasn't he right? What else are you and I but women?"

The Queen's honesty of mind and speech found their full flowering among the Scottish people. John Brown came from beside the Dee, which was both the cradle and the grave of the Queen's domestic happiness. In the first years of her married life, Balmoral had been her only escape from London. The Prince Consort had loved Balmoral best, seeing something of the beauty of Thuringia in the mountains and something of the single-minded candour of the Thuringian peasants in the Scottish servants who attended him there. When the Prince died, John Brown had already been in the Royal employ for twelve years.

Brown was singled out for a personal service at the time of the Prince Consort's death, which provides another reason for understanding the Queen's devotion to him. During the first weeks of her widowhood, her family and the members of the Court were distressed because she would not take any exercise. They decided to bring her favourite pony from Balmoral, with Brown to lead her and to attend upon her. In the days when she wished to be free of family and Ministers, it was Brown who went out with her upon her dismal little pony rides about the gardens. He had been

her husband's servant and she naturally saw in him a link with all the deeply personal recollections of Balmoral.

The Queen understood John Brown and he must have understood her. She might often be perplexed by the "cleverness" of Ministers, for the Queen was not "clever," but she did understand the unvarnished candour of John Brown. One day at Balmoral she wanted a table for her sketching materials. Two or three were brought to her, but they were either too high or too low. Brown lost his patience. "This maun dae," he said, "for thae canna' mak' one for ye." On another day, he disapproved of some garment the Queen was wearing and he said, "What's this you've got on the day?" To a woman whose character was for ever greater than her intellect, Brown must have seemed to be a rock of strength. His merits were never admitted very generously by his contemporaries, but, to the Queen, Brown could do no wrong. Only princes who have been surrounded by courtiers and servants all their lives could appreciate the refreshment and trust which could arise from such honest service.

The Queen was not saved from public insult over the friendship with her servant. ". . . wicked and idle lies about poor, good Brown" appeared in the Scottish newspapers. She wrote to Lord Charles Fitzroy of this and of the rumours in London, as "*merely the result of ill-natured gossip in the higher classes*" caused, she said, because they were dissatisfied at not being able to force her out of her retirement and also by "love of ill-natured finding fault." She ignored the gossip and announced her attitude in the last sentence of her letter. "The Queen will quietly and firmly continue to do what she thinks and knows to be right, though it will leave a painful, bitter feeling in her heart, towards many—not easily to be eradicated."

The Queen seemed to lose all consciousness of her exalted position in Scotland. "Those dreadful reporters" exasperated her when she went out on the hills for her picnic luncheon with Brown to carry the hamper and boil the kettle. She was pleased when she drove with the Duchess of Sutherland, because the people did not recognise *her*, and excited when she ate haggis or when one of the cottagers patted her on the arm and told her that her daughter was "a great pet." One day, two little children were drowned in the

burn near to Balmoral. The Queen sat for hours on the bank with the people from the village, waiting for the bodies to be found. And afterwards, when she had returned to the castle, she bethought herself of her humble neighbour. So she went out again and "drove up to warn Mrs. William Brown never to let dear little Albert run about alone, or near to the burn." Brown and the other Highland servant, Grant, understood the Queen's wish for simplicity. They had been on all the old expeditions when the Queen and the Prince Consort would sleep in small inns, unrecognised, enjoying their meals together. They had been from cottage to cottage at her heels, the Queen carrying a big roll of Scottish linsey, from which she cut lengths for the old women's petticoats. These people had no conception of Royal glory. She was their Queen in the same way that their Lairds were the heads of their families.

One evening the Queen's carriage swayed from the road, in the dark, and Brown was obliged to walk, leading the Queen home on her pony. It was a rainy, miserable day. Next morning, the Queen was much distressed to find that poor Brown's legs had been cut by the edge of his wet kilt, just at the back of the knee. He had "said nothing about it." A hundred little scenes tumble out of the pages of the Queen's Journal, to reveal the affectionate, personal relationship between the Queen and her servant; none more thrilling than the account of Brown rushing to the Queen's carriage at Buckingham Palace and seizing the miscreant who had interrogated her with a petition and a pistol. On this occasion, it seems that he saved her life.

The judgment of those who knew the Queen was that the relationship between herself and Brown was wholly innocent, but that it would have been "expedient" if she had moderated it. Her answer to this would have been her answer to a Prime Minister who used the word to her: "I have been taught, My Lord, to judge between what is right and what is wrong; but *expediency* is a word I neither wish to hear again nor to understand."

### *Chapter Thirty-one*

1865-1866

In October, Lord Palmerston died, "in the plenitude of his political and intellectual power." The Queen turned from her usual reproaches and she remembered that his cynical, ungracious figure was a link with the old days. He had lived for eighty-one years: until he had seemed like a shade, remaining with her from the giddy epoch before she was Queen. But there were phrases in her letters which showed that she felt Eternity's gain to be also her own. ". . . Poor Lord Palmerston," she wrote to her uncle, "It is very striking, and is another link with the past—the happy past—which is gone, and in many ways he is a great loss. He had many valuable qualities, though many bad ones. . . . But I *never* liked him, or could ever the least respect him, nor could I forget his conduct on certain occasions to my Angel. He was very vindictive, and *personal* feelings influenced his political acts very much. Still, he is a great loss! I shall have troubles and worries . . . I sometimes wish I could throw everything up and retire into private life. . . ."

The Queen did not retire: she imposed her will in the reshuffling of offices with sturdy enthusiasm. She hated changes, but she watched the moves at Westminster anxiously. Only a few weeks before, she had heard from her daughter that the King of Prussia was "under the influence of a clever, unprincipled man" who had completely changed him. This was Bismarck, who was arming his soldiers with the new needle-guns, to make battle still more terrible. No statesman was to be allowed to usurp Queen Victoria's rights and power in this way. Her letters to her Ministers were numerous and her wishes were emphatically expressed. Lord Russell became Prime Minister again, in his seventy-fourth year. Otherwise the Ministry was not drastically changed because of Palmerston's death. Lord Russell was not as self-willed or complicated as Lord Palmerston had been. The Queen had disliked Palmerston because he was complex and unscrupulous: two aspects of human nature which she could never understand. He had once written, "When people come to the point to which you wish to bring them, you ought not to be too nice about the road they have chosen for getting there." To a woman

like the Queen, who found the simple word "expedient" repugnant, such ethics in her Prime Minister were frankly shocking.

It was not until February of 1866 that the Queen could be induced to open Parliament again. The mass of people poured over from Lambeth and from the East End, past the place where Cromwell's head had been impaled upon a pike. The people from the West of London drove down, past the statue of Charles the First in Trafalgar Square. The lesson of Cromwell and the Stuarts was one that they had forgotten to heed. Their Queen was to appear from the dungeons of her bereavement. She came from Osborne, "much exhausted," and she drove through the streets of London. From the pavements, the windows and the balconies, she was seen by a new generation. This was before the day of the Press photographer: many of the people who had waited since dawn did not even know what their Queen looked like. For them she was a dim oracle. One of her Ladies wrote, "She looked grave, but she bowed kindly and unceasingly on all sides and sat forward as one would have wished." Dean Stanley remarked how much more enthusiastic the cheering for "the Wales Couple" had been, than for the Queen. In some places unkind things were said and a man in the crowd was heard to say, "If she does not bow, I'll strike her!" But she did bow, gravely, as the carriages rolled on, through a day so fine that it might have been a day in May.

In her own Journal the Queen wrote, "A fine morning. Terribly nervous and agitated. . . . Dressing after luncheon, which I could hardly touch. Wore my ordinary evening dress, only trimmed with miniver, and my cap with a long flowing tulle veil, a small diamond and sapphire coronet rather at the back, and diamonds outlining the front of my cap.

"It was a fearful moment for me when I entered the carriage alone, and the band played; also when all the crowds cheered, and I had great difficulty in repressing my tears . . . the people seemed to look at me with sympathy. We had both windows open, in spite of a very high wind. When I entered the House, which was very full, I felt as if I should faint. All was silent and all eyes fixed upon me, and there I sat alone. . . ."

The Lord Chancellor read the Queen's Speech as she sat upon the throne. Her Empire was growing in territory, and most of her

subjects were living in peace. The Irish were up to their tricks again, but the Maoris in New Zealand were more obedient. European neighbours were comparatively quiet. Her Uncle Leopold had died at the end of a successful, constructive career: her daughter Helena was engaged to marry Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein. On the West Coast of Africa and in the Persian Gulf, commerce and morality were sailing hand in hand, for the trade in slaves was going down and the trade in merchandise was going up. The American Civil War was past. At the end of the address, there was a hint at Parliamentary Reform.

When the speech was ended, the Lord Chancellor turned to Queen Victoria and bowed. She "slightly but courteously returned the salute." Then she rose from the throne, stepped down and kissed the Princess of Wales, and walked out, with the poise and grace which thrilled people, even when she was old. Delane softened. Although he referred to the grief "which everyone hoped would have been more speedily lessened," he allowed his journalist to write in *The Times* of "the loftiest and most beloved head in the realm."

The Queen walked out, past the stiff figures, on the arm of her son. She hurried back to Osborne—almost alone, "terribly shaken, exhausted, and unwell from the violent nervous shock of the effort she made. . . ." Princess Helena watched her anxiously and wrote of her mother as being "softened and gratified and in a good frame."

During 1866 the Queen made still more efforts to calm the public restlessness over her retirement. After the opening of Parliament in February, which she likened to "an execution," she seemed to find a little of her old courage. She held Courts at Buckingham Palace and she went to Aldershot: she attended two Royal weddings, one the marriage of her daughter, Princess Helena. She even looked on at the Highland games at Braemar, full of conversation, and she opened the Aberdeen waterworks. She drove through the crowded streets of Wolverhampton to unveil still another memorial to the Prince Consort. These busy appearances helped her to conquer her obsession. The change manifested itself in her private life, and when Lady Augusta Stanley went into waiting, in December, she saw signs of the new courage: the Queen

"most sweet," no longer repining, talking, not as one unique in sorrow, but as "one of ourselves," and, an eminently good sign, she spoke "of no affairs of her own." The last public protest against the Queen's seclusion was made early in December, at a Reform meeting in St. James's Hall. Then her champion was none other than her political enemy, John Bright. He astounded everybody by saying, "I am not accustomed to stand up in defence of those who are the possessors of crowns; but I could not sit here and hear that observation without a sensation of wonder and pain. I think there has been, by many persons, a great injustice done to the Queen in reference to her desolate and widowed position. And I venture to say this, that a woman—be she Queen of a great realm, or be she the wife of one of your labouring men—who can keep alive in her heart a great sorrow for the lost object of her life and affection, is not at all likely to be wanting in a great and generous sympathy with you."

John Bright had touched the mainspring of the Queen's despair. Her womanly instincts needed male support and encouragement. When these were taken from her, she was at sea, and she fell into the sin of self-pity. It was in this year that she began her friendship with Benjamin Disraeli, finding in him the safety and kindness none of her English Ministers had given her since Melbourne and Peel. Even if the Queen did not wholly comprehend the field of creative talent, she knew it by instinct as being different from pure efficiency. Disraeli was a creator as her husband had been.

The Queen's life was to be divided into three periods, each of them dependent upon the influence of a man. First, the girlhood, in which her innocent devotion to Lord Melbourne made it possible for him to guide her over the first cataracts of her reign. Then the matron, radiant in the security of her married life with the Prince Consort. Then, as the third story, the romantic friendship with Disraeli which gave pleasure, confidence and even purpose to her widowhood. The empty years were between 1861, when the Prince Consort died, and 1866, when Disraeli came into the Royal circle again, as Chancellor of the Exchequer. These were the years in which she made her greatest mistakes as a mother and as a Queen. She was incomplete without the different kinds of help which she

received from Lord Melbourne, the Prince Consort and Benjamin Disraeli, in these three seasons of her reign. She admitted the desolation which overwhelmed her when she was not thus supported. Some years later she wrote, with curious humility, in her Journal:

"I feel how sadly deficient I am, and how over-sensitive and irritable, and how uncontrollable my temper is, when annoyed and hurt. But I am so overcome, so vexed, and in such distress about my country, that that must be my excuse. I will pray daily for God's help to improve."

There was another reason why the Queen came to find that Disraeli was a friend after her own heart. When his wife died in 1873, he was alone. This allowed the Queen to see more deeply into his nature, for she also knew the exile of bereavement. However confident Disraeli may have seemed as a statesman, however ruthless in forcing the issues of his life, nobody can read his letters without discovering the wistful, Jewish sense of inferiority and loneliness which no achievement could kill. As he said, power came to him "twenty years too late" to represent fulfilment.

Also, Mr. Disraeli was so different from the tiresome Mr. Gladstone. There were no half shades in the Queen's likes and dislikes and Mr. Gladstone did not "fit in." He was a stranger in the Court when he came down to Windsor. When he first arrived from London to stay at the Castle, the Ladies had thought him very agreeable. "And oh! What a charming voice!" But the charm had faded. Next month, when he departed, they were sad, but they dubbed him "a thought too systematic." The same witness said in November of 1866, that he had "no possible understanding of a joke." This excluded him from the homely relationships at Windsor and the Queen was glad when the Government collapsed at the end of the year. With Mr. Disraeli, the story was different. The Prince Consort had said that "the Jew had not one single element of a gentleman in his composition." This was forgotten in 1866. The success which came to him in his parleys with the Queen stirred older statesmen to cruel gibes. Lord Clarendon wrote, "The Jew, 'the most subtle beast in the field,' has, like Eve's tempter, ingratiated himself with the Missus." The House of

Commons still cried at the memory of Disraeli's flamboyant waistcoats. Prince Albert had been one with them in this prejudice. But even her husband was capable of pettiness which could never have been awakened in the Queen.

1866

Lord Russell's Ministry retired from office in the summer. Lord Derby's Conservative Ministry came into power, with guarded views on the Parliamentary Reforms for which the country was clamouring. The Queen wished that Reform could be avoided for one more year, but the public impatience and the political pressure were too great, after fifteen years of procrastination.

Mighty changes had come to England since the day of the Queen's accession. Science and industry were causing strange splits in the crust of the English system. Chemical processes were giving the poor people cheap soap, glass and paper. Artisans and miners could afford lamps to read by and books which gave them a glimpse of scenes beyond their drab, smoke-dimmed windows. Great parks, where tranquil oaks shaded ancient lawns, were molested by railways: chimneys rose with the elms, against the English sky. Old houses, built from the oak of Elizabeth's ships, were being torn down and factories built in their place. The industrial plague was upon the land: wages were increased and the poorest children learned to read and to write. Slowly, the peasant and the labouring man came to know their own power. When the cry for Parliamentary Reform became louder, the people were tipsy over the sudden realisation of their own strength. Londoners crowded into Hyde Park on July 23rd: they trampled over the lawns and flower-beds to hear the many speakers who rose above their heads to damn the Tory Government and to speak of the freedom and the rights of the masses. But the masses became apathetic again in the face of the Communist promises. There were eighteen hundred policemen, a company of Grenadier Guards and a troop of Life Guards in Hyde Park, but they made no attempt to quell the speakers. A few "roughs" threw stones and they were arrested. At Marlborough Street next morning, when they were brought before the magistrate, he found that only six of them were respectable working men. *The Times* of the next day said that "The fatigued audience were glad to

get back as soon as possible to the various public-houses which served as their headquarters."

When Parliament was opened in February of the following year (the Queen drove to Westminster through rain and mud), a Reform Bill was more or less promised in her speech. She announced also that a commission would enquire into and report upon the organisation of Trades Unions, because of the discontent between employer and working man. The Reform Bill was passed—the most liberal change in franchise since 1832. Ratepayers and small men of respectable industry and substance found that they were active figures, with the power to vote. A hundred signs of the emancipation and education of the people appeared in the life of London and the countryside. New schools were opened and the educational policies of Eton, Harrow and Winchester were made more liberal. The Duchess of Sutherland held a meeting at Stafford House in support of the Saturday Half-Holiday Movement. Ten thousand people attended the South Kensington Museum every day and the business of the Post Office grew, especially with the advent of the halfpenny post-card. With enlightenment came cures for cholera and other pestilences. There was already a venereal disease hospital in London, although the secretary considered that "the special character" of its mission made it "not easy to plead in public" for support. In all the small details of day-to-day life it was apparent, at the end of 1866, that Britain was moving along the road of democracy and prosperity.

One of the reasons for England's greatness has been her firm belief in her own high moral purpose. She has usually established her trading stations hand in hand with her missions. These conquests have blessed the English with a glow of self-righteousness and they have never understood the stirring of similar, mercenary ambitions in other countries: especially Prussia. Being the worst diplomatists in the world, the Prussians did not pause to throw any of the dust of high purpose into their eyes when they began to desire territory and imperial magnificence. Bismarck was candid enough to confess Prussia's ambition and to use the phrase which was so shocking to his English contemporaries—that the problems of Germany would be satisfied only through "blood and

iron." The Queen believed in Prussia's destiny but not in the way Bismarck wished to pursue it. What Prince Albert had said in 1847 was still wisdom to her in 1866. He had said: "My own view is that the political reformation of Germany lies entirely in the hands of Prussia." The Queen accepted this as law. "A strong united, liberal Germany would be a most useful ally to England," she wrote to Lord Stanley.

In March the Crown Princess wrote from Berlin, in a fever, about "the wicked man" and his power over the King. On April 10th, remembering her attempts at mediation between the King and the Emperor of Austria in Coburg, Queen Victoria wrote a private letter to the King of Prussia, begging him to pause before he succumbed to Bismarck's ambitions. "You are deceived," she said. But the thundering machine of Prussia went on. Bismarck sought to complete what had been thought of in 1848: a country which was one country, not thirty-six little States. Europe needed one strong master and it was right and good that Germany should assume the rôle. In June, the first openly hostile step was taken when the Prussians drove the Austrians out of Holstein. The Prussians turned then to Hanover. The blind King of Hanover was driven from his throne and he became an exile in Paris. Victory followed victory, and on July 3rd the Austrians were defeated at Königgrätz, in Bohemia. (Among the wounded was a young officer named Hindenburg.) Bismarck's needle-gun, the ambassador of more terrible machines of war, was too much for the Austrian muzzle-loaders. Austria fell back, defeated and discouraged, and the Catholic priests in Vienna trembled lest the hard-fisted religion of Luther should sweep south, with Prussia's soldiers, and assail the Roman power. Peace came to a fattered, prosperous Prussia and to a humiliated Austria. Queen Victoria pleaded with the victors for the poor King of Hanover, and for the family of her own daughter in Darmstadt. The letter from the Crown Princess of Prussia, in answer to her mother's compassionate plea, was astounding. "I cannot, and will not, forget that I am a Prussian," she wrote, forgetting her recent thanks to God that she was English. She continued: ". . . as rivers of blood had flowed and the sword decided this contest, the victor *must* make his own terms and they *must* be hard ones for the many. . . . We have made enormous sacrifices, and the

nation expects them not to be in vain. I fear this is all the answer I can give you at present. . . ."

1865-1868

There is a school of commentators who say of Queen Victoria, "She lost us Ireland." In all the years of her rule the Queen spent less than five weeks in Ireland and almost seven years in Scotland. The affection she denied to Ireland she gave to Balmoral and to the Deeside. It was enshrined in the *Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands*, which was published in 1866. There was a chorus of praise in the newspapers. The naïve record of the day-to-day life of the Queen, of her picnics and of her health, her servants and her dogs, gave the people a peep into the seclusions of life at Balmoral. Lady Augusta Stanley was sceptical over the success of the book and she said that if the Queen had settled on Ireland instead of Aberdeenshire, "the ecstasies and interests that would have grown up would have been just as great" and that "Fenianism would never have existed." Lady Augusta realised the perils in the Queen's antipathy and, when she went herself to Ireland in the summer, she wrote to her mistress, gently trying to draw her interest towards the rejected country. "How much I hope that Your Majesty may some day be able to see some of the peculiar beauties of Irish scenery. . . . I am certain that Your Majesty in no degree over-estimates the good that would result from it. The people are very sensitive and so alive to anything that honours them and their country and *raises them and it* in their own estimation and in the scale of nations. . . ."

The Prince of Wales supported the views of both Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone, together with the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, that the one way to hold the distressful country would be to give it some form of Royal patronage. The division of the people into those who left Ireland, embittered, for America, and those who stayed, in the anxiety of famine—appalled them.

The one hope, it seemed, was to give Ireland Royal patronage by appointing the Prince of Wales as Lord Lieutenant. Mr. Disraeli wrote in March of 1868, that a house for the Prince in Ireland—in a hunting county—would combine pleasure and duty in

the way "which befits a princely life." The last picture to please the Queen was of a gallant Prince, away from her control and free to amuse himself on the other side of the Irish Channel. She already thought him too much of a gadabout. "The country and all of us, would like to see you a little more stationary," she wrote to him in October of 1866. This further threat of freedom was "not to be thought of." Perhaps it was true, as she told Gladstone, that "she doubted the Prince's fitness for high functions of State." Three Prime Ministers, the Lord Lieutenant and the Prince himself pleaded in vain. Even General Grey, her secretary, was "very angry with her about the Irish matters." Lady Augusta Stanley, who knew the Queen's mind so well, made a searching comment: "I believe she is so afraid lest any of them should be taken up by, or take up the Irish so as to throw Balmoral into the shade, now or later. I really do."

Lord Spencer, who had been Lord Lieutenant, was so forlorn at the rejection of his design that he wrote frankly to the Queen's secretary, saying that he felt inclined "to throw up the sponge and retire to his plough in Northamptonshire." Even the Prince, who so much wished that the Irish could be "humoured a little and taken notice of," at last fell back into torpor, under his mother's assurance that his plan for living in Ireland was "quite out of the question."

The Queen listened more patiently when Mr. Disraeli spoke to her of Ireland. Lord Palmerston had been blunt enough to point out that it was "politic and useful." Indeed, he had frankly and stupidly described the Prince's proposed visit to Ireland as a "journey for a political purpose in place of Her Majesty." Mr. Gladstone, who thought that the Prince had "much natural intelligence," had sharply announced to the Queen that the question of the Prince's residence in Ireland was to come before Parliament. Mr. Disraeli was more subtle when he became Prime Minister, in February 1868. He pleaded to the Queen only for "the tranquillisation of the disturbed country." He reminded her too, that her son might be installed as a Knight of St. Patrick. He turned to history for his argument and he told the Queen that, during two centuries, the Sovereign had passed only twenty-one days in Ireland.

In April of 1868 the Queen allowed the Prince of Wales to cross

the Irish Channel with England's olive branch in his hand. This was his first attempt at reconciliation among his mother's people. His smile and his gallant manner won the day. With Princess Alexandra sitting beside him in Dublin Castle—with the Irish multitude still waiting outside—he wrote a letter to his mother. "There were an enormous quantity of people in the streets who cheered very lustily, and with the exception of a very few and slight kisses, the people seemed determined to give us a thoroughly cordial reception." On the 18th he was installed as a Knight of St. Patrick. There was a State dinner at the Castle in the evening and the Prince spoke, without any notes—a straightforward, sincere message of goodwill. The Duke of Cambridge, the Prince and the Princess, and the Lord Lieutenant sat in Dublin Castle after it was all over, planning to soften the Queen's heart. The Prince wrote: "I only wish, dear Mama, that you could have been here instead of us." The Lord Lieutenant wrote that he was "hardly prepared for the progressive increase of welcome." Even the Fenian sympathisers had cheered. The Duke of Cambridge wrote: "Come over to convince and satisfy yourself of the force of the affectionate feeling."

The Queen was not moved. In March of 1871 there was another incident which increased her dislike of the Irish. Lord Spencer unveiled a statue of Prince Albert on Leinster Lawn, in Dublin, and, two months after the ceremony, the Fenians tried to blow it up.

There was a deeper reason behind the Queen's suspicion of Ireland and her love for Scotland. She was rigidly Protestant. Popery and devilry were synonymous to the Queen, and her cold religion drew her away from all sumptuousness in worship. Many times it drew her away from the Anglican Church, for she liked the simple services of the Scottish Kirk. No matter how much she made friends of Dean Stanley of Westminster, Dean Wellesley or Dean Davidson, it was to Dr. Macleod that she was wholly devoted. She cried when she was told that he was dead. *His* religion she understood. On religious matters, she wrote, she "could ask him anything." In November 1873, the Queen's anxiety over the Church caused her to protest. She wrote to Dean Stanley of the "Romanising tendencies" of the English Church. "She thinks a complete Reformation is what we want," she wrote, with honest motives,

but little knowledge of what complete Reformations involved. She was against "dressings, bowings . . . and, *above all*, all attempts at *confession*." She attacked the *bigotry* and *self-sufficiency* of the Church and added that she thought it should "bethink itself of its dangers from Papacy, instead of trying to widen the breach with *all* other Protestant Churches." "The Church will fall," she threatened.

If she was so violent in her fear of the feeble attempts at Popery in the Anglican Church, how much more was she afraid of the out-and-out Roman Catholicism of Ireland? She had refused to allow her son to be alone in the room with the Pope, in Rome, in case a word might be distorted, a phrase exploited, by the Holy Father of bigotry. The Queen was equally antagonised by the extreme of Evangelism and when the Sankey and Moody Mission came to England in 1875, she deplored the "*sensational style of excitement*" associated with the movement. She thought theirs was "*not the religion which can last*." In this unreasonable Lutheranism, there may lie still another reason why the Queen looked upon Ireland as the black sheep of her Imperial family.

Queen Victoria may have been intolerant in her dismissal of Ireland and the Irish, but there was courage in her scorn of the strength of the Fenians, as well as of their spirit. *Guelph courage* is a phrase among European historians. In the English line, George the Fourth was the only Sovereign who lacked it. Queen Victoria had laughed when a man shot at her as she was driving past the Green Park, and, when a second attempt was made on her life, she had driven out of Buckingham Palace immediately afterwards, to draw the assassin out of hiding. She was able to "sit quite still" when, in later years, a madman cut her face with a whip. In this she was magnificently brave. She did not know fear, and when the Fenians threatened to kill her, in Ireland's name, the Queen perplexed everybody by her calm and fearlessness. She was almost fifty when, in the summer of 1867, a telegram arrived at Balmoral, saying that a party of Fenians had set out from Manchester to seize her. She said it was "too foolish," and she continued her long drives, unprotected, into the surrounding country. As Fenian passions became stronger, Ministers and friends were more and more anxious for the Queen's safety. She alone was calm. When

her servants saw her driving out into the wooded country at Osborne, there was mild panic, for rumours of plots came to the island almost every day. At last General Grey, her secretary, wrote her a letter indicating the dangers she courted. Everybody was afraid for her. He would go on his bended knees, he wrote, and ask her to leave Osborne, with its open shore and woods, and live safely at Windsor. The Queen defied all. She continued to drive in the woods and to walk down, past the pines and ilexes, to the shore of the Solent. She told General Grey, with fine anger, that she would not go to Windsor and that she would not "have it mentioned again."

One of the reasons given by the Queen for not wishing the Prince of Wales to visit Ireland in 1868 was that there were to be races at Punchestown. "It strengthens the belief," she wrote to her son, "already too prevalent, that your chief object is amusement; and races have become so bad of late, and the connection with them has ruined so many young men, and broken the hearts thereby of so many fond and kind parents."

Two daughters and two sons were already born to the Princess of Wales. Marlborough House was the scene of vivid parties and unrestrained fun, but there was no neglect of the nursery. The Prince was aware of the faults in his own training and he tried not to repeat them. In 1873, he had been to the House of Lords, to hear Lord Granville's speech, and he was obliged to leave before it was ended. The note he sent to Lord Granville reveals his relationship both with the statesman and with his children. He apologised for hurrying away—he was celebrating the birthday of his "eldest little girl," he wrote. "The Princess and I are going to take four of the children to the circus at 7.15, and it is now 6.30. I have not a moment left."

The British public had been bored by the virtues of the Prince Consort. Many of them were equally censorious over the gaiety of his son. Neither *The Times* nor *Punch* spared him. When the Prince of Wales showed that the Hanoverian blood had not faded from the family, he was set upon by gossips and newspapers and, at last, by the perpetrator of an action for divorce. Sir Charles Mordaunt brought a petition against his wife, citing two co-respondents, who were friends of the Prince, and also

making an allegation against the Prince of Wales, upon the authority of his demented wife's confession. Lady Mordaunt was hopelessly insane before the case came into the Courts, but the Prince's name was so unhappily dragged into the affair that he volunteered to go into the witness-box to clear his honour. The evidence against him hung on eleven letters, written to Lady Mordaunt, scattered over a period of two years. None of them began with phrases more affectionate than "My dear Lady Mordaunt." When a provincial newspaper published the letters, the most incriminating phrase was, "I hope when I come back from Paris to meet your husband." *The Times* described them as "simple, gossiping, everyday . . . stupidly honest letters."

The trial opened in February of 1870 and the Prince went into the witness-box and cleared his name enough to earn the congratulations of Mr. Gladstone, the Lord Chancellor and *The Times*. Mr. Gladstone wrote, ". . . so long as the nation has confidence in the personal character of its sovereign the throne of this Empire may be regarded as secure." For some time the Prince suffered as much as if he had been proven guilty. He went to a theatre and he was insulted. At Epsom there was hissing when he appeared. Few people paused, in the fever for dangerous gossip, to realise that there was a more serious aspect of his life, such as his yearly manœuvres with the 10th Hussars. Here the Prince of Wales rose at six o'clock in the morning and faced the rigours of camp life. Nobody remembered that if he gambled at night, he also worked all day, denying his help to no charity or cause. Wellington College, the Royal Agricultural Society, the Society of Arts and the building of the Royal Albert Hall were aided through his zeal. He was not lazy. He was no gilded patron, free with his name and tardy with his energies. There was a fine, class-free acknowledgment of the ordinary citizens' rights in all that he did and in every cause which he supported. His father, who had built the first ideal workmen's flats in Kennington with bathrooms, and who had publicly reprimanded the employers and *not* the employees, when he was asked to speak upon Labour questions, might have been pleased with his son if he had heard the address the young Prince prepared for the Trade Unionists' Exhibition. He annoyed the capitalists, as his father had done, by saying that he hoped that the increase in

manufactures would mean "a corresponding increase of sympathy and friendly relations between employers and their workmen." The Prince Consort would have welcomed this strain of sane sympathy in his son, however much he might have wept because of the scandals over amorous adventures and hours wasted at the gambling tables. No matter how much he played, to give vent to his store of fun, the Prince of Wales did not neglect his duties as a husband and a father.

"Class can no longer stand apart from class," he once said. Although he was inviolate in protecting and sustaining the dignity of princes, he was a democrat, and he worked successfully for the broadest good. His theories on democracy never permitted any lapse of dignity or any offence against law and order. He was kind, but punctilious.

The truth was that the members of the old-fashioned London society, discontented as all city society must be, were as annoyed by the Prince's easy habits as they had been exasperated by the Queen's withdrawal from their drawing-rooms. The Prince's vagaries of behaviour were indications of a change. The century was slowly shaking off the lull which had settled upon it during the Prince Consort's worthy and wholly noble reign. The country was rich and the standard of living was passing the point of reason: society tended to forsake elegance for vulgarity.

The Prince was identified with the changes. With the material transformations there came also revolutions against morbid hero-worship and history-worship. The scene of his mourning mother caused the Prince to turn, almost ruthlessly, from the past. He had complained in Rome, "You look at two mouldering stones and are told that it's the temple of something." When news of the death of a distant relative reached him one evening in Paris just as he was going to the theatre with some friends, he did not hesitate in saying, "Put on black studs and go to the play." Nor was he loth to have the Duke of Wellington's statue on the top of the Arch moved to the entrance to Constitution Hill, when the increase of traffic demanded more space at Hyde Park Corner. It was the Prince's letter which gave Gladstone his plan for the change and the Prince was wholly and sensibly pleased when the space was cleared and the statue was given to Aldershot. "We had a very pretty and

successful ceremony at Aldershot yesterday," he wrote to a friend, in August 1885, ". . . I handed over to the General Commanding the troops there . . . the old stattie of the great 'Dook.' "

It is singular that Queen Victoria made no comments during the scandal of the Mordaunt divorce case. Nor were there reproaches for her son. With all her rigid standards of behaviour, the Queen was not a prude. This has been the easy and inaccurate accusation made against her by so many writers. The much-talked-of Hanoverian blood was strong in the Queen and although the Prince Consort had curbed her boisterousness, he had not killed it. Being so curiously alone, she was removed from the contacts which engender fun. But there are records of the Queen's enjoyment of a faintly *risqué* story. One night at dinner, somebody was talking of the Zulu War and they said that the Zulus came over the top of the hill "like a swarm of cockroaches." A man at the table, in the zest of his spontaneous wit, corrected the speaker and offered another simile in place of the cockroaches, frankly phallic and very funny. The company became rigid. After a moment the Queen laughed—alone. Even upon the subject of sex, aspects of which we might imagine to be unknown to her, the Queen was not as intolerant as we would expect. Once it is said, the subject came up in conversation, during a time when there was a public scandal to excite the moralists. The Queen said, "I am not concerned with what my subjects do, providing they do what I wish."

## *Chapter Thirty-two*

1868

The Queen's letters became more lively during Mr. Disraeli's short term of office in 1868. Lord Derby was obliged to retire in February because of his pestilential gout. The Queen's secretary went to Mr. Disraeli, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, and found him "very cordial and *most* practical in all he said; going straight to the point and showing a most sincere desire to do nothing that could look presumptuous on his part, or unhandsome towards Lord Derby." The Queen was waiting anxiously at Windsor, still hating all changes, but pleased that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was coming to her in still closer relationship. The spirit of her political correspondence changed overnight. In his first letter, Disraeli showed that he knew how to please the Queen as neither Lord Derby nor Mr. Gladstone had ever done. Disraeli was humble: he asked for her guidance, since he was so young and inexperienced. He wrote, "Your Majesty's life has been passed in constant communication with great men . . . . this rare and choice experience must give Your Majesty an advantage in judgment which few living persons and probably no living princes can rival." In one isolated line of the letter, Disraeli wrote that he "could only offer devotion." The Queen's reply was warm and friendly, and when their relationship as Sovereign and Prime Minister was established, the correspondence between them became jolly at times. Instead of long, gloomy arguments, Mr. Disraeli's letters gave her pictures which she could comprehend. Sometimes, when Mr. Gladstone wrote to her, she had to ask her secretary to help her to disentangle his meaning. She was confused by his lugubrious moralising. Not so Mr. Disraeli, who wrote of Gladstone, ". . . it is marvellous how so consummate an orator should, the moment he takes the pen, be so involved and cumbersome and infelicitous in expression." When Mr. Disraeli had an appointment to recommend, he used the craftsmanship of the novelist to give the Queen an unerring picture of his man. One of his first duties was to appoint a new Chancellor of the Exchequer, to take his place. He wrote to the Queen of Mr. Ward Hunt whom he proposed. His appearance was "rather remarkable, but anything but displeasing. He is more than six feet

four inches in stature, but does not look so tall from his proportionate breadth; like St. Peter's, no one is at first aware of his dimensions. But he has the sagacity of the elephant, as well as the form. The most simple, straightforward, and truthful man Mr. Disraeli ever met. . . ."

Here was a Prime Minister after the Queen's own heart, for she disliked bores. Disraeli's letters from the House, even when they were written by a tired hand late at night, were entertaining to receive: his little pictures of the speakers—"Mr. Lowe, who raised his crest, and hissed like an adder."

In September the friendship between the Queen and her Prime Minister was complete. Chivalry, humour and kindness were its mainstays. There were little gifts: two volumes of views of Balmoral, a box full of family photographs and a very fine, whole-length portrait of the Prince Consort. Upon the same day the Queen sent a Scottish shawl for Mrs. Disraeli, with the hope that "she would find it warm in the cold weather."

This first opportunity for friendship between the Queen and Mr. Disraeli was short-lived. At the end of the year Mr. Gladstone pressed the affairs of Ireland so forcibly on the House that Disraeli was obliged to advise the Queen to dissolve Parliament. A General Election followed, with the increased enfranchisement granted by the Reform Bill of the previous year. The Liberals swept into power with Mr. Gladstone triumphant in the tide and his Bill for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of Ireland in his hand. Mr. Disraeli suffered a momentary eclipse. He retired from the Royal favour as he came. The Queen's secretary went to him again and he wrote to her, from London, that nothing "could have been more proper or manly than Mr. Disraeli's way of taking what he admits to be a total defeat."

Again the Queen had to accept a change, and Mr. Disraeli came to take leave of her. The Queen, who thought that he showed more consideration for her comfort than "any of the preceding Prime Ministers since Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen," turned gloomily to the Liberal reign, with all the doubts and resentments that the word held for her. At first the glow from Mr. Disraeli's friendly calls lent light to the new regime. She was so forthcoming with Mr. Gladstone in their first interview that he went away

"completely under the spell." She thought him "cordial and kind in his manner." The whole interview was "satisfactory." But when the new Prime Minister returned to Downing Street, he took the Bill for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of Ireland out of a drawer—a Bill which the Queen frankly disliked. Before the end of January he sent her upwards of a dozen quarto sheets of explanations. She was at Osborne and when she found the formidable letter waiting for her on her desk, she read and re-read it, but "found herself more and more lost in the clouds of his explanations, the more she toiled through them." She sent for Theodore Martin to help her. With his *précis* she was able to understand, but even Theodore Martin, professional editor and scholar, admitted that it "seemed only natural" that the Queen "should have been lost in the fog of the long and far from lucid sentences of her Prime Minister."

On March 5th, 1868, the Queen made one of her rare visits—to the Deanery at Westminster. Lady Augusta Stanley, for ever anxious to find correctives for the Queen's loneliness, had asked Carlyle and Browning to meet her at tea. The Queen thought Carlyle "strange-looking, eccentric," holding forth "in a drawling, melancholy voice upon Scotland and upon the utter degradation of everything." Mr. Browning was "very agreeable." At first it was shy work for her to speak to them, but afterwards, when tea was being drunk, Lady Augusta "got them to come and sit near" her. Then, under the spell of her voice, they "were very agreeable and talked very entertainingly." Lady Augusta's effort was akin to the Prince Consort's plan, in the early days. He too had wished to gather the intellectuals of the day about him, but without much success, for he was discouraged by the Queen. Lady Augusta suffered the same fate. In 1876, she again asked the Queen to the Deanery at Westminster to meet some notables. The Queen went home depressed by the experience. She thought one of them "rather ponderous and pompous." Froude had fine eyes, "but nothing very sympathetic." Professor Tyndall "not very attractive" and another, though young and pleasing, was "very shy."

The Prince of Wales and Princess Alexandra went to Egypt and Constantinople in the spring of 1868, so the five grandchildren

stayed with their grandmama at Windsor. She found "Eddy . . . very good and very sensible."

Two years before, the Queen had made a journey to London, to call upon Princess Mary of Teck and her new baby. The Queen was assailed by a hundred memories when she came to Kensington Palace—the house of her birth and her childhood. The old courtyard, where her pony had waited for her—the scene of the Round Pond by which she had walked, in the shadow of a big footman—the flower border which she had watered, spilling the water on her little white shoes. She came now quiet and forlorn. She went in through the door, "the very knockers of which were old friends."

The Queen passed through the quiet palace. Here was the room to which they had come, to tell her that she was Queen: here the room in which Baroness Lehzen had first told her, as a child, that she would grow up to be a sovereign. And here, the room in which she had slept, so many, many years ago. Now there was a cradle in the bedroom, and in it lay the new baby—Princess May, "with pretty little features and a quantity of hair," much too young even to dream that she, too, would some day grow up and be Queen of England.

The victory of 1866, when Prussia defeated Austria and extended her territory, was not enough for either Bismarck or the brilliant soldier Moltke. Their amazing army could be mobilised within twenty-four hours. Potsdam was no longer the hub of a little country, but of a growing empire. Bismarck had not allowed his needle-guns to rust after the defeat of the Austrians at Königgrätz.

The King had listened to the tempter. With such an army and such a Minister—a Chancellor of Iron—he would become Emperor of all Germany and no longer be merely the King of Prussia. The King, Bismarck and Moltke—the Prussian army and the Prussian people, shared the thirst for power. The sounds of the parade ground were in their ears and the stink of gunpowder was in their nostrils. All that was needed was a cause.

About this time there was a proposal to put a Hohenzollern Prince on the throne of Spain. France, forgetting Louis Philippe's deception of England over the Spanish marriage in 1846, protested

against this threat of German influence in Spain. The French Ambassador was sent to speak to the King of Prussia, who was then taking the waters at Ems. The Ambassador hurried away, saying that the King of Prussia had snubbed him. Paris rose in wild pride and indignation, and the cry was, "*à Berlin!*" Everything tumbled into Bismarck's hands. The Empress—the army—all except the Emperor believed that France could march *à Berlin*, and war was declared. The ill-equipped French threw themselves against the terrible machine of Prussia's army, only to be defeated and humiliated, as the Austrians had been, four years before. The victory at Sedan was followed by the *Commune* and then the capitulation of Paris. The Emperor, exhausted and ill, his body almost falling from his horse, was taken as a prisoner to Wilhelmshöhe, near Cassel. The French were beaten mercilessly.

Prussia spread herself to new magnificence, and Alsace-Lorraine, with its vine-laden valleys, was added to her territory. Catholic Bavaria and other German countries were wooed into the Prussian fold. In January the King returned to the Palace among the lakes of Potsdam, radiant: he was able now to call himself Emperor. Queen Victoria looked on, amazed. "A peaceful Germany can never be dangerous to England, but the very reverse," she wrote, still clinging to Prince Albert's dictum.

In the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War England's sympathies went with those of the Queen against France. The Germans had been "insulted and attacked" and Mr. Gladstone wrote, on July 15th, that it was evident "that the sentiment of the House on both sides" was a general condemnation of "the conduct of France." ". . . The feeling of the people and country here is *all* with you, which it was not *before*," the Queen wrote to her daughter at Potsdam. The Crown Princess, so stiffened by the militarist spirit when the Prussians were battling with the Danes a few years before, had relaxed and had softened her tone on the eve of another war. She had written emotionally to her mother, "Why continually speak of enmity and hateful conduct when, as history teaches us, national misunderstandings can be settled by rational handling of questions of common interest. . . How many poor mothers will be praying with me for the lives of their dear ones. . . I cannot think of the lives that will be lost—how willingly would I give mine to save

theirs." But she tightened her grip again when victory came in September, and when the Emperor was a prisoner at Sedan: when he was brought to Bismarck, in the weaver's cottage at Domchéry, bereft and ill, after his surrender.

The Crown Princess forgot her charity in the hour of victory. "We have no less than 12,000 French prisoners in Germany! Is it not marvellous?" she wrote. "Add to that more than fifty Generals and the Sovereign himself." Then she wrote of the noble purpose behind Germany's triumph. The blow to the "immoderate frivolity and luxury" of Paris: the victory to the "plodding, hard-working, *serious life*, which made Germany strong and determined."

On September 5th, a mob surged into the Senate in Paris and proclaimed a Republic. Queen Victoria received the terrible news while she was walking among the larch trees at Balmoral. "Not one voice was raised in favour of the unfortunate Emperor!" she wrote. "How ungrateful!" She could not comprehend war or revolution. She ruled a country which had not known battle since 1745, and then only on the border. Nor had there been revolution. Only once in her reign had the malcontents clutched the railings of Buckingham Palace. Then they had melted away, to become next week's joke in *Punch*. Her experience of revolution was limited to reports from poor Ireland. Her only knowledge of war was in the stories from the Crimea, which had been chilled and faded by the time they arrived home. Queen of a sea-girt land, she could not know the hysteria and anxiety of countries which were bounded by frontiers. She saw government in the terms of politics and war as a fault in the diplomatic machine; not as a grim physical struggle for earth and existence. She did not begin to understand the nature of the hatred between Germany and France.

The tale of the forsaken Emperor, alone in Sedan, touched her heart. She wished to telegraph to the Empress that she was not insensible to the heavy blow which had fallen on her. She was "not forgetful of former days." The phlegmatic calm which strengthened her when others were mad, came to her now. She telegraphed to the triumphant King of Prussia that he could afford to be generous, since victory and glory were in his hands. He was to stand in the Galerie des Glaces at Versailles, the memorial of France's Imperial glory, and be proclaimed "Emperor." The Queen thought that

the closed hand might unclench and indulge in mercy to the vanquished.

On September 15th, 1870, Sir John Montague Burgoyne wrote to the Queen's secretary, describing the circumstances in which he had brought the Empress Eugénie to the English coast. She had sobbed, as she came from her place of hiding in Deauville, telling him that she was "safe with an Englishman." It was not until the last day of November that Queen Victoria went to see the Empress at Chislehurst, in Kent. It was a "dull, raw and cold day." The Queen was met at the door by the "poor Empress, in black." Queen Victoria wrote in her Journal that she looked very thin and pale, but still very handsome. "There is an expression of deep sadness in her face, and she frequently had tears in her eyes. She was dressed in the plainest possible way, without any jewels or ornaments, and her hair simply done, in a net, at the back." "It was a sad visit," wrote the Queen, "and seemed like a strange dream." In March, 1871, when the humiliation and pain were passing, the Queen received the Emperor at Windsor, embracing him *comme de rigueur*. As he came towards her, the Queen, with all the security of Windsor about her, thought of the last time he had come, "in perfect triumph, dearest Albert bringing him from Dover, the whole country mad to receive him." Now he came, bereft of all power and magnificence, "stout and grey . . . his moustaches no longer curled or waxed. And there were tears in his eyes." When the Empress Eugénie returned the Queen's visit, she arrived at Windsor in tears. The Queen solaced her in her own inexplicable way. She took her down to the mausoleum at Frogmore, through the pouring rain.

Her visits of compassion to the exiles did not lessen the Queen's devotion to Germany. But the feelings of her people changed. While the Crown Prince was writing to the Queen from Germany of the fine hopes in a triple alliance between Germany, England and Austria, and of his wish that England should learn to do justice to German affairs, instead of seeing only *Force and Militarism* in her ambitions, a tremendous twist was coming to English feeling — a change too deep and powerful to be affected by a Royal lead or by political persuasion. The British people suddenly gave their compassion to defeated France. The sight of a vanquished

Emperor, living in a house on the edge of London, stirred them more than the distant and more frightening spectacle of a King turned Emperor, leading his soldiers through the streets—their bayonets shining in a rain of flowers. The Queen noted the change in her people and she wrote to Mr. Gladstone of the sympathies which, strange to say (for no one exactly knew why), had "become very French." She had been talking to Lord Derby and, although he had confessed that only "the smallest number of very foolish people" wished for England to join in a war against Germany, the admission was astonishing, when the public tenderness for the German cause, but a few months before, was recalled. The small number of "very foolish people" formed the spring which grew into the violent river of 1914.

The Prince of Wales was drawn into the new sympathy. His love for France had begun when he was a boy in his teens: he had said to the Emperor Napoleon III, when he was in Paris in 1855, "You have a nice country. I would like to be your son." The affection had slumbered in him until 1864, when the war between Prussia and Denmark incited first his interest, and then his hatred of the Prussian aims. With the experience of the Franco-Prussian War to stimulate his feelings, he took a definite stand against Germany, antagonising his mother, the Crown Prince, Bismarck and Count Bernstorff, the German Ambassador in London. He faced the indignation of the formidable array with more courage than tact.

He had written to the Queen, when his sister in Berlin expressed her fears lest France should win, that this peril would help Prussia to realise "what the feelings of little Denmark must have been when they heard that the armies of Prussia and Austria were against them." A few days after the declaration of war, the Prince had dined with the French Ambassador. A gossip at the table hurried to the German Ambassador next day and the result was an astonishing dispatch to Berlin, saying that the Prince of Wales had expressed his wish for Germany's defeat. The Crown Princess reported her brother's crime to the Queen, and said that his words were "quoted everywhere" in Germany. Bismarck believed the story and he declared that Germany had a foe in the heir to the British Crown. Queen Victoria defended her son and dubbed Bernstorff as "a shocking mischief-maker," but she was also

perplexed by the Prince's frequent want of tact. The Prince sent his secretary to Count Bernstorff to deny the story and Bernstorff professed to accept the assurances, but he waited his time. A few months afterwards, when the Prince's great friend, the Marquis de Galliffet, was taken prisoner, the Prince wrote a letter to the King, begging for his exchange. Count Bernstorff dismissed the letter as "irregular" and he refused to forward it to his Sovereign. The Queen put a further curb upon the Prince's freedom, for she was afraid of his enthusiasm and the candour which went with it. It was her nature, in a crisis, to be calm. It was her son's nature to wish "to be of use." He was at Abergeldie in August, but he was restless. He forsook his shooting party and wrote to his mother, "I cannot be sitting here and doing nothing, whilst all this bloodshed is going on. How I wish you could send me with letters to the Emperor and King of Prussia, with friendly advice, even if it ultimately failed." She joined with her advisers in thinking her son's wish to be "highly creditable." Thus she patronised his enthusiasm, adding that it would be impossible, "even if he were personally fitted for the task."

When the Empress Eugénie arrived in England, the Prince offered her Chiswick House. The Queen reprimanded him for his "presumptuous indiscretion" and the Empress tactfully refused. Then he wished to help a fund for sending corn to French farmers, for the hungry peasants. Again he was rebuffed. The Foreign Secretary said "No."

The frustration by his mother and her Ministers did not cool the Prince's sympathy and in June of 1878 he walked through the streets of Paris at the head of the funeral procession of George the Fifth, the blind ex-King of Hanover. To the Prussian mind, the Prince had led an anti-Prussian demonstration in Paris.

These were definite manifestations of the Prince's devotion to France and they were also bitter proofs of his dislike of the "bullying" spirit of the German Government. He did not pretend to sympathise with his mother's Prussian leanings and the Queen saw her son receding from her—he was less and less within her comprehension. The emotions of the British people went with him. On January 14th, the Emperor wrote to Queen Victoria regretting the "change of popular feeling in England." At first, it had been "all

in favour of Germany." "No one can regret more than I do the signs of ill-feeling which are arising between England and Germany —the two countries . . . in all respects destined to go hand in hand." Then, confusing the achievements of Bismarck with those of his Creator, he wrote, "I cannot but be proud that God has chosen to raise me . . . I take it with humility, as I do all God's dealings with us."

### *Chapter Thirty-three*

1864-1892

Sir Sidney Lee described the Disraeli-Gladstone years as the "golden era in English politics." The Prince of Wales passed through the "golden era," struggling with both Prime Ministers for the full diplomatic information and confidence which were denied to him until November, 1892, when he was a man of fifty-one years. The exclusion of the Prince from affairs of Government involved three people: his mother, who thought him wanting in discretion, and, during their alternate seasons of power, Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli. When he was twenty-eight years old, the Queen still wrote to him *earnestly and seriously*, asking him not to go more than two days to Ascot races. She pleaded, "I hear every true and attached friend of ours expressing *such anxiety* that you should gather round you the really good, steady, distinguished people. . . ." This time he was brave and assertive enough to resent interference. "I am past twenty-eight and have some considerable knowledge of the world and society," he answered. Mr. Gladstone favoured the heir, and their relationship enjoyed moments of candour and friendliness. Gladstone thought the Prince intelligent and, after they had played whist together at Abergeldie, the Prime Minister wrote of the Prince's "usual good manners." Mr. Gladstone admitted the Prince's talents, but Mr. Disraeli described his conversation as "chitter-chatter."

The split between the Queen and the Prince, over access to State papers, had begun during the war between Prussia and Denmark in 1864. Had he agreed with his mother, the Prince might have been allowed to peep into the imposing, red leather boxes from Whitehall. The Foreign Secretary of the time had sponsored the Prince in his wish for more information, but the Queen had said "No." All she could permit was a *résumé* of the papers and then, only those *she* might choose. The Prince was forced to turn to less informed channels for his information. He read the newspapers, like any other man, and he picked up relayed secrets and gossip from Westminster. In 1882, when he was forty-one years old, the Prince protested again, telling his mother that he was denied even as much information as fell into the hands of private secretaries to Ministers.

The Queen repeated her old reply. It would be "quite irregular and improper": besides, he "talked too much." Not until he was forty-four years old did the Queen go so far as to allow him to learn the "decisions or changes of policy before they became known." Her Prime Ministers, her secretaries and friends pleaded for the Prince, but she continued to feel that her middle-aged son was not to be relied upon. She was afraid, too, that he would discuss affairs with the members of the Government and thus weave a web of political influence. "It would not be desirable," she admitted, "that W. G. [Gladstone] and His Royal Highness should have discussions which she knew nothing about."

In 1886, during Mr. Gladstone's term of office, a gold key was found in the Foreign Office. It had been the Prince Consort's own key for opening the special boxes in which only the most confidential papers were kept: the last stronghold of the Foreign Office secrets. Lord Rosebery was Foreign Secretary in 1886 and he handed the key to the Prince of Wales. For the first time, the secrets of the country he was to rule were laid bare to him.

This dogged campaign against her son's participation in State affairs has been a peg for many of the Queen's biographers and critics. Here they have found proof of her selfishness and lack of vision. But there is another side to the story. The Queen looked upon her Crown as a sacred trust. Nowhere, in all the thousands of documents written during her reign, is there any hint at a broken secret, or violated confidence. From beginning to end, she was scrupulously honest over the conversations and documents of State. For her, the less rigid methods of the later part of the century were disturbing. She was always haunted by stories of the parties at Marlborough House—the gay company and the late hours. The Queen saw most events in the terms of pictures—the precious red boxes, the precious documents and the precious key, upon a table at Marlborough House, during a ribald party! She shuddered at the picture and she exaggerated the dangers. But it was as much to guard her sacred trust as through suspicion of her son's talents and integrity, that she withheld the key from him for so long.

1871

The self-confidence of the Queen and her subjects was shaken at the end of 1871, when the Prince of Wales fell ill with typhoid fever. At the prospect of his death, the members of the Royal family were reconciled and the mass of the British people were anxious and deeply stirred. They found themselves more passionately devoted to the Royal cause than they had imagined. There had been apathy and even demonstrations . . . . echoes of the Communist fever which was once more upon Europe. In April there had been the mass meeting in Hyde Park to demonstrate English sympathy with the Paris Communists. While the Queen was writing naïvely of "these horrid Communists," they were finding in her and in the Prince of Wales a butt for their restlessness. It was suggested in both the Press and the House of Commons that the Queen and the Prince of Wales had used the Foreign Office messengers for sending letters to their relatives in Germany during the Franco-Prussian War. The accusation was silly, for the obligations of a neutral country would not require that a Sovereign should not communicate with her own daughter. The story involved the Prince of Wales and it was enlarged so that he was obliged to make a protest and an explanation. Then came a restirring of the old rumour that the Queen was to abdicate. The story persisted, and as late as 1877 there were reports in the newspapers that the Queen had abdicated and that she intended to pass the remainder of her days in Scotland. While these rumours disturbed the public mind, the Queen remained rock-like: even when Sir Charles Dilke attacked her personally before big audiences at Newcastle and Leeds. He wished to know why Royal dowries should be paid, and he deplored the cost of the Court, which he estimated at one million pounds a year. He described the expense as a "moral mischief" and added that it would perhaps be worth two million pounds to put an end to it. His remarks and the derision of his audience were all reported in *The Times* for the Queen to read: even Dilke's description of one of the officials as the "Court undertaker," and the quick, cruel answer of a man in the audience who said that he wished the Court undertaker had more work to do.

The Queen was unmoved. She read *The Times* without comment, as  
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she lay on her sofa at Balmoral, crippled by gout. In April, she read the new Budget. While London was playing with the rumour of her abdication, she ignored the newspapers and she sat in the gardens of Osborne, reading the Chancellor of the Exchequer's plans for raising new revenue. One of the causes for this need was the death of the old Purchase system in the Army. Among the items was a proposed tax upon matches. The Queen pounced upon this and she wrote to Mr. Gladstone ". . . the poorer *classes* will be constantly irritated by the increased expense and reminded of the tax by the Government Stamp on the box." She was wise and right. This letter was written on April 23rd. Next day, as she foresaw, a procession of poor match-makers, representing the 30,000 men, women and children employed in the factories, marched to Westminster. The Queen's angry intervention and the match-makers' protest forced the withdrawal of the item from the Budget. Her agitation was never in favour of the rich, nor did she seek protection for the upper classes. In October of 1873 she was alarmed because of the numerous accidents on the railways. She wrote to Mr. Gladstone: "In NO country except ours are there so many dreadful accidents, and for the poor people who have to travel constantly by rail, and who cannot have the comparative security which those who travel in first-class carriages *can* have, to be in perpetual danger of their lives is monstrous."

It was on November 22nd that the Queen heard from Sandringham of her son's attack of "mild typhoid fever." She was herself recovering from an operation to her arm and a devilish attack of rheumatic gout. Her Journal, written during these days, reveals the true pluck with which she met pain or mischance. She struggled against her own weakness and set out for Norfolk. When she came to Sandringham, she was allowed to step into the bedroom, and stand "behind a screen, to see her son sleeping or dozing." The room was dark and only one lamp was burning, so she could not see him well—"lying rather flat on his back, breathing very rapidly and loudly." It all reminded her, "vividly and sadly," of "dearest Albert's illness." Standing behind the screen, peeping at her son upon his bed, the hardness vanished. Princess Alexandra too needed affection and help from her now. The simple, pathetic depths in her were stirred: the depths which used to be stirred in

the old days when she was alone with Prince Albert in their little sitting-room at Osborne, when all the others had departed.

It was to this simplicity that the Queen returned at Sandringham, when all the anxieties of being a Queen were drowned by the simple fear and compassion of being a mother.

It seemed that the falling away of her life had already begun. Her sister was to die very soon. She had loved Princess Hohenlohe very dearly: her "*last near relative*" who was on "an equality with her." "No one can really help me," she wrote in her Journal. "All, all gone." In January of 1873 Napoleon III was to die at Chislehurst, and in June, Dr. Norman Macleod, her beloved friend, at Balmoral. She was to weep many "bitter tears." In December, Lady Beaconsfield died and, within a year, her dear friend Winterhalter died—Winterhalter, who had painted her with Prince Albert so many times. In October, Sir Edwin Landseer died. Bereavement followed bereavement and her years became one long chronicle of death. Even her favourite dog was to die: Dacko, with his "funny, amusing ways" and his "large, melancholy eyes." He died while she was at Sandringham sitting in the room with her son.

The Communists were silenced by the threat of the Prince's death. London forgot its impatience and the word "abdication" was no longer mentioned. A wave of dread swept over the land, and columns of anxious messages appeared in the newspapers. In Penzance and Hawick, in Tunbridge Wells and in Dover, the people stood hour after hour in the December cold, waiting for the new bulletins on the doors of the post offices. The telegraph had been invented so that the far-away corners of the Queen's Empire were able to think with her and to talk to her. The anxiety touched the southern edge of New Zealand: it hushed the voices of Canadians and it quietened the disgruntled settlers at the Cape. They might grumble against the central power which ruled them, but once the existence of that power was endangered, a curious and passionate anxiety took the place of discontent. People telegraphed their homely remedies for typhoid to the Queen, some, "of the most mad kind." On December 8th the report was so alarming that the Queen hurried down to Sandringham again, "a melancholy journey" which exhausted her. But she sat in the darkness behind

the screen, peeping round the corner every now and then to watch and to listen to the troubled breathing. Hour after hour she waited. Sometimes she was so tired that she drowsed at her vigil.

At half-past five on the morning of the eleventh, the Queen was awakened by Dr. Jenner. "At any moment" Bertie might die. She hurried through the cold passages of Sandringham to the dark room, "the candles burning, and most dreary," expecting death. But her son did not die. On the thirteenth, she wrote in her Journal:

"I was so terribly anxious, and wanted to be of any little use I could. I went up to the bed and took hold of his poor hand, kissing it and stroking his arm. He turned round and looked wildly at me, saying 'Who are you?' and then, 'It's Mama.' 'Dear child,' I replied. Later he said, 'It is so kind of you to come,' which shows he knew me, which was most comforting to me. I sat next to the bed, holding his hand. . . ."

On December 14th, the anniversary of his father's death, the Prince showed the first signs of change. "On this very day," the Queen wrote in her Journal, "our dear Bertie is getting better instead of worse." On January 1st when she went to him, he was able to kiss her and to give her a New Year nosegay, which he had ordered.

A season of peace came after the Prince's illness. The talk of Republics and contempt for Crowns passed into the background. *The Times* dwelt upon the "warm and personal" relationship between the Queen and her people. All rancour had died with the fear of death, and on February 27th the Queen, the Prince and Princess Alexandra drove through happy, cheering London, to a thanksgiving service in St. Paul's.

The Queen wrote in her Journal:

"Luckily a fine morning. . . . Went to dress, and wore a black silk dress and jacket, trimmed with miniver, and a bonnet with white flowers and a white feather. Beatrice looked very nice in mauve, trimmed with swan's down. . . . Bertie was very lame and did not look at all well, I grieved to see. My three other sons were there, and the poor Emperor Napoleon and Empress Eugénie,

who were anxious to see the procession quietly. . . . The boys with little George went on and got into an open carriage and four, with Lord Ailesbury, and in a few minutes I followed, taking poor Bertie's arm, for he could only walk very slowly, down to the Grand Entrance. We entered an open State landau with six horses, ridden by three postilions. . . . The deafening cheers never ceased the whole way. . . . We seemed to be passing through a sea of people, as we went along the Mall. . . . At the corner of Marlborough House there was a stand on which stood Bertie's dear little girls, who waved their handkerchiefs. . . . Everywhere troops lined the streets, and there were fifteen military bands stationed at intervals along the whole route, who played 'God Save the Queen' and 'God Bless the Prince of Wales' as the carriages approached, which evoked fresh outbursts of cheering. I saw the tears in Bertie's eyes and took and pressed his hand."

Two days afterwards, a poor, mad boy presented a pistol at the Queen as she stepped out of her carriage. Brown, her servant, seized him. This last sensation was providential, for it shook the Empire to the core. Londoners came again to the railings of the Palace, all day and all night, to stare at the doors beyond which the symbol of their safety lay. There was not a word of complaint: only thanksgiving. The change in public feeling was almost as unreasonable as the carping had been. When Sir Charles Dilke stood up again in the House and moved for an enquiry into the Civil List, he was howled down. Mr. Gladstone opposed the motion contemptuously, and it was rejected by 276 votes to 2.

*Chapter Thirty-four*

1873

Mr. Gladstone was busy with his Irish University Bill at the beginning of 1873. It was defeated by 287 votes to 284 and he went to the Queen and resigned. She sent again for her favourite, but Mr. Disraeli's glorious hour had not come and he declined to take office with such a slim majority. So Mr. Gladstone was Prime Minister again, although his Liberals were already wilting under the growth of Tory popularity. By-elections were thinning out the ranks of his followers. Again, in the moment of uncertainty between Liberal and Tory, the Queen showed herself as a great constitutional monarch. Excepting Queen Victoria, her secretary was the only person who was aware of both sides of the story: of the interview with Gladstone, heavy under the threat of eclipse, and of the interview with Disraeli, in which the Queen saw hope of a return to the régime which she liked. General Ponsonby could not contain his admiration and he wrote of her "clear and unmistakable directions," of the way in which she had considered each difficulty, promptly deciding upon it, and with an accurate knowledge of precedents. He was amazed by the way in which she conducted the conversations, skilfully avoiding "taking any step that was liable to misconstruction." He commended her "love of fairness and justice to both parties" and her "clear-sighted judgment."

The Government jogged along. Income tax fell from fourpence to threepence and the tax on sugar was reduced. The country was prosperous—new millionaires ripened in the Midlands and Australian sheepowners came home and increased the ranks of the rich. In June the Queen celebrated the thirty-sixth anniversary of the day of her Accession. But she had no time for contemplation, for the Shah of Persia was coming to see her. Again the Windsor hill was gay with flags and covered with people. The Shah came, like a Prince out of a fairy story. His coat was buttoned with big rubies: his sword hilt and epaulettes were all of diamonds, each with a huge emerald in the centre. His sword hilt and scabbard were adorned with jewels and an aigrette of diamonds sprayed from his astrakhan hat. Two chairs were placed in the middle of the room and upon

these the Shah and the Queen sat and talked. She was shy at first, but her sense of humour conquered her. "Very absurd it must have looked," she wrote. She gave the Shah the Order of the Garter, "Arthur and Leopold" helping her to put the blue riband over his head. Then the Shah gave her an order, much to the danger of her cap, as he tried to put the riband over *her* head. The Grand Vizier helped this time. Before he left, the Shah took off his aigrette and put on his spectacles. The two chairs were put against the wall again. The Shah went back to London where his fine horse with the pink tail was waiting for him. The Queen sat down to a dinner of roast beef and talked of the thirty-six years in which she had ruled England. She thought it "almost impossible."

1866-1874

When the Prince's efforts to help in British affairs were curbed, he turned his energies to other fields. Quite naturally, it seemed, he identified himself with the other countries of the world: with France, Austria, Denmark and Germany. He travelled as far east as Russia, and as far south as Egypt and India. His taste for talk with cosmopolitan people, his gift for languages and his flair for international politics increased his success in the capitals and Courts of Europe. But there was another reason why he became the friend of so many princes. His mother's unwillingness to entertain Royal visitors to England threw the onus and the pleasure of host upon him.

It is astonishing to read of the growth of the Prince's friendships and influence during the eight years before 1874. In 1866, he had been to Russia for the first time. On this journey he had stayed with the new King of the Belgians and he had celebrated his twenty-fifth birthday with his sister and her family, which included the Queen's first grandchild, the future Emperor William II, in Potsdam. In 1867, he had entertained the Sultan of Turkey in London. In 1868, with Princess Alexandra, the Prince had made a great journey. It began in Copenhagen, where he was wholly loved by Princess Alexandra's family. His friendliness graced all occasions. The Prince and the Princess went to Berlin, where all but Bismarck spoke cordially to them, although there were moments in which the Prince felt that he was being treated as "a French spy." The King gave the Prince of Wales the Order of the Black Eagle.

The collar of the Order which was given him had belonged to his father. From Berlin the Prince and Princess went to Vienna, where the Emperor entertained them magnificently. Here was sumptuousness which was lively and dazzling, after the solid domestic air of the Court at Windsor. Everybody was charming to them. They floated across Europe upon a tide of compliments and favours. Every day the ramifications of their life and interests were extended.

Upon the same journey the Prince and the Princess crossed the Mediterranean and travelled a thousand miles on the Nile. The Near East opened its gaily painted doors to them. The Prince talked to M. de Lesseps, the designer of the Suez Canal, and when he returned to England, he showed a pleasant freedom from insularity by urging that the coveted Albert Medal should be given to the Frenchman. In April they crossed the Mediterranean again and steamed into the Bosphorus. The Princess was entranced by the scene of Constantinople—the domes of St. Sofia and the slim minarets rising from beside the water. The Sultan was half mad with joy over his visitors, and he made the Moslem purists angry because of the gaiety of his entertainment. For the first time in his life he gave a party. Up to then, nobody but the Grand Vizier had ever been allowed to eat with him. The doors of the Palace were opened wide—the doors into the hundred white rooms—into the sacred gardens, noisy with the screeching of parakeets. Twenty-six guests, including women, sat at the Sultan's table. He came out from behind the hundred walls of the Palace to attend a ball at the British Embassy. The Sultan was very sorry, he said, that the dictates of the Prophet forbade his giving a similarly splendid ball in return. The Prince and Princess rambled through the bedlam of the Constantinople bazaars, in the guise of "Mr. and Mrs. Williams." From Turkey they travelled to Athens: from Athens to Paris, and then home. The world was their oyster now.

In 1873, the Prince went to stay with his sister, Princess Alice, near to Darmstadt. At Jugenheim, set in one of the prettiest parts of the country, he was completely happy, for he was with his beloved sister and he was free to speak of the big affairs of the world to the princes who came there. His talk was eager and his plea was always for peace. There was a long conversation with the Czar of Russia, who also came to stay. The Prince was one of the first to be told of

the betrothal of his brother, Prince Alfred, to the Grand Duchess Marie: one of the first to imagine that the marriage would bury the hatchets of the Crimea. There was a more thoughtful note in the Prince's letters as these new interests awakened him. He was encouraged to believe that he was already a friendly influence between nations.

1874

The new year began dismally for Mr. Gladstone. On December 29th he had written in his diary: "Sixty-four years completed to-day—what have they brought me? A weaker heart, stiffened muscles, thin hairs; other strength still remains in my frame." But he wrote now like an old man. On January 8th, Mr. Gladstone wrote to Lord Granville of the disintegration of the Liberal Party. "The signs of weakness multiply," he wrote. He had to admit that his Government was ceasing to "possess that amount of power which is necessary for the dignity of the Crown and the welfare of the country." He turned restlessly in his bed in Carlton House Terrace, demoralised by bronchitis, and with the darkness of an election before him. He wrote to the Queen of "a tightness of the chest," and he confessed his desolation to her. He could expect indulgence, but little sympathy. In his letter he recalled the recent history of Liberal failure; the defeat of his Irish Universities Bill in the previous March, the continual snubbing of his measures by the House of Lords, and the by-elections in which his Liberal candidates had been tumbling over like nine-pins. England was tired of his reign. On January 23rd, Mr. Gladstone sent the Queen an ominous telegram. The Cabinet had agreed to dissolve. Scene followed scene, each one intensifying the Liberal calamity. At the age of sixty-five, Gladstone went to Greenwich like a novice in politics, to induce his electors to vote for him. They came in thousands to listen, but he had to stand, bareheaded in the drizzling rain, with a cart for his platform. His voice and his powers were as wonderful as ever. He was returned to Parliament again, but he led a thinned army. The Tories surged into Westminster with a majority of eighty-three for all Great Britain.

On February 17th, Gladstone set out for Windsor, carrying a copy of Thomas à Kempis in his hand, for reading in the train. He

drove up the Windsor hill and into the great quadrangle of the Castle. The Queen received him kindly but there was little tenderness and less commiseration. He wished Parliament to dissolve at once. Even the Queen's suggestion of an honour for him only deepened his gloom. "Oh! Nothing!" he said. He could not accept any honour "in the face of such condemnation from the country." He repeated his explanation of the Liberal decline. When he had driven down the hill again, the Queen sent for Princess Beatrice and asked her to write down her own notion of why Gladstone had failed. "I could, of course, not tell him that it was greatly owing to his own unpopularity."

Next day Mr. Disraeli came. Almost immediately, Windsor smiled again. Not more than a dozen sentences were exchanged between the Sovereign and the new Prime Minister before she thought something "amusingly said." Disraeli gave her back what she always felt to be wilting when Gladstone was in the room: her self-confidence. Gladstone made her feel that her power was shaky. Disraeli "repeatedly said" that what she wished "*SHOULD be done*, whatever his difficulties might be. . . ." Her capitals and italics were signs of her refreshed sense of security. A few weeks afterwards, Mr. Disraeli showed how truly he understood the Queen. "It may be unconstitutional," he wrote, "for a Minister to seek advice from his Sovereign, instead of proffering it." His excuse for his lapse was her "unrivalled experience of public life." The Queen blossomed again under his encouragement. The "very grave" Mr. Gladstone was safely out of her sight. When Disraeli came to her on February 20th, they talked about the changes and the difficulties, but he made them all seem to be so easy and so much less alarming. When the audience was over, Disraeli knelt down before her, his head bowed. The Queen extended her hands. Disraeli raised them to his lips and he kissed them. The deep, beautiful voice whispered to her, "I plight my troth to the kindest of *Mistresses*." His magic lay in his ability to convince her that she was still ruler of England.

Mr. Gladstone had faced the long interviews and the drizzling rain at Greenwich, while he was still weak from bronchitis. He was tired. He packed his possessions at Number 10, and he bade his room farewell. All that he wished now was to spend the

remainder of his days "in tranquillity," providing, he wrote, that this was also God's pleasure.

In March, Gladstone read his rival's old novel, *Vivian Grey*, and he declared the first quarter to be extremely clever. But the last three-quarters were "trash." Mr. Disraeli's opinion of Gladstone's "scribblement" was no less scathing. "Gladstone, like Richelieu, can't write," he declared to Lady Bradford. "Nothing can be more unmusical, more involved, or more uncouth. . . . He has not produced a page wh. you can put on yr. library shelves . . . ." Mr. Gladstone turned to his "scribblement" with a heavy pen. His theme was *The Vatican Decrees in their bearing on Civil Allegiance: a Political Expostulation*. One hundred and forty-five thousand copies were sold before the end of the year. Mr. Disraeli spoke generously of him in the House, praising his "illustrious career." The public voice was more kind than the opinions expressed in private. Disraeli wrote to Lord Derby of Gladstone as an "unprincipled maniac . . . extraordinary mixture of envy, vindictiveness, hypocrisy and superstition . . . ."

Mr. Disraeli had once dared to say, "I am never well save in action, and then I am immortal." The day had come for him to prove his un-English boast to be true. His letters to Queen Victoria became as like love letters as he dared to make them. But while he was plighting his troth to the Queen, he was also writing exuberant love letters to Lady Bradford, and at the same time he was proposing marriage to her sister, Lady Chesterfield. With all his artifice, Disraeli was an incurably romantic boy. At an age when other Prime Ministers become stolid and phlegmatic, he admitted that he "sighed for the moonlight." "I think I could live and love in that light for ever," he wrote. To frigid Englishmen, such notions in an old man were alarming. The good Briton, who will enter a burning building to save a woman he does not know, but who will not rise from his chair to open the door for his own wife, has little truck with gallantry. Nor does he understand or condone the harmless romantic flights of a man like Disraeli, who said, when he was a young man, "My nature demands that my life should be perpetual love." His nature did not change. When he was seventy years old, writing of his joy in women's company, he said, ". . . if, in the sunset of life,

I have still a young heart, it is due to that influence." His romances were violent but innocent. He courted affection freely and he gave it with equal generosity. If his bouquets were placed tenderly upon many doorsteps and not merely upon one, they were no less elegant and sincere in their message.

Disraeli once confessed that he was not fond of male society and that he owed everything to women. It is doubtful whether he would have shone as radiantly among the Victorians if he had served a King instead of a Queen. He admitted that he felt "fortunate in serving a female sovereign." There was a rare and noble emotion vouchsafed to Disraeli which helps one to understand his devotion to his women friends. He was grateful. Somebody once spoke to him of his wife, for whom, it is obvious, he did not feel or profess a passionate devotion. He is said to have answered, "I only possess one quality in which most men are deficient: gratitude." The record of all his friendships shows this to be true.

1874

Mr. Disraeli had not been in power very long when the Queen renewed her support of the war against ritualism. Disraeli also felt disgust at the "finical and fastidious crew" in the High Church, although he admitted that the Public Worship Regulation Bill was "the most difficult question" that had ever been placed before him. The Bill was to give Secular Courts the power to suppress ritualism. Time has proved the Bill to be ineffectual, but the will that urged it through Parliament never relaxed until August of 1874, when it was passed. During this year, letters were exchanged between the Queen, the Prime Minister and the Archbishop, all destined to flout the "unwise and unprotestant" arguments of Mr. Gladstone. The Queen wrote memoranda to Mr. Disraeli, laying down her ideas of which appointments would "strengthen the tottering fabric of the Established Church." He wrote to her, as she lived in the "sweet stillness of Clatemon" or with "the bonnie breezes of Balmoral," in apparent agreement with all she said. Her letters were insistent, now that she knew that she was not writing in vain. Mr. Disraeli never became impatient under the deluge of her correspondence. He answered gently, ". . . supported by Your Majesty, Mr. Disraeli is in good heart." He once confessed his way

of dealing with his Sovereign. "I never deny; I never contradict; I sometimes forget."

On August 6th, the Queen wrote to the Archbishop in high delight. The "welcome news" of the passing of the Bill had reached her at Osborne. Mr. Disraeli hurried down to the Isle of Wight with fuller news of all that had passed. Mr. Gladstone and his High Church ritualists had been defeated and, as far as he knew, the Queen's people were safe from the tentacles of Rome. Mr. Disraeli recorded the scene in a letter to Lady Bradford. He wrote it from Longleat, where he was staying with Lord Bath. He pleaded that she could not expect a good letter, since the paper, "muddy ink, and pens, wh. are made from the geese on the common," entirely destroyed any genius he had.

"Osborne was lovely, its green shades refreshing after the fervent glare of the voyage, and its blue bay full of white sails. The Faery sent for me the instant I arrived. I can only describe my reception by telling you that I really thought she was going to embrace me. She was wreathed with smiles, and as she tattled, glided about the room like a bird. She told me it was 'all owing to my courage and tact,' and then she said, 'To think of you having the gout all the time! How you must have suffered! And you ought not to stand now. You shall have a chair!'

"Only think of that! I remember that *few* Lord Derby, after one of his severest illnesses, had an audience with Her Majesty, and he mentioned it to me as proof of the Queen's favour, that Her Majesty had remarked to him 'how sorry she was she could not ask him to be seated.' The etiquette was so severe.

"I remembered all this as she spoke, so I humbly declined the privilege, saying I was quite well, but would avail myself of her gracious kindness if I ever had another attack! . . ."

### *Chapter Thirty-five*

The history of Britain and the Empire during Queen Victoria's reign revolves about three achievements. The two material conquests were in industry and the gaining of territory. The third, noblest conquest was in the improvement of the standards of living, education, health and morality. A century of peace at home gave Britain opportunities which were denied to Germany, France and Austria; she was allowed to advance through the "exasperatingly slow process" of evolution. The chief ways of this advance were through the Public Health Acts, the Artisans' Dwellings Act, the Employees and Workmen's Act, the Trades Union Act, the Friendly Societies Act, and the Factory Act of 1878. These were all part of enlightened legislation which transferred the power to rule from the hands of the few into the hands of the many. When the Queen was born, no Jew, Roman Catholic or Nonconformist could take a degree in an English University. This insular limitation was removed. Law became more compassionate during her reign. (It is surprising, in the light of nineteenth-century reforms, to be told that a woman was hanged at Marble Arch for stealing a roll of stuff, little more than a hundred years ago.) Distance became less formidable through invention and engineering and in 1875 the Queen travelled from London to Balmoral in forty-eight hours. In the same year there was already talk of a Channel tunnel and the building of the Forth bridge was begun in 1882. The engineers of the nineteenth century were changing the tempo of life.

The standard of living in the working-man's home was revolutionised during the Queen's reign. Artisans were allowed annual holidays, and water and gas were carried by pipes to cottages which had always relied upon tallow candles and village pumps. Before she died, the Queen used a telephone and she was photographed by a motion-picture machine. Not even the daguerreotype had been invented when she was a child. The national income grew by about three hundred per cent between 1840 and the end of the century.

Turgot wrote gloomily of Empire building, and of colonies as being "like fruits which cling to the tree only until they

ripen." There were reasons, still not easy to define, why a different kind of colonial Empire was to grow during Queen Victoria's reign. In 1840, the exports to British possessions were valued at seventeen million pounds. In the year of the Queen's death, they reached their zenith for the century: more than one hundred and two million pounds. The territory in the Empire grew by one-third during the reign. The Maoris had ceded New Zealand to the British Sovereign in 1840. Twenty-seven years later the scattered Provinces of the North were united in the Dominion of Canada. The Government of India was transferred to the Crown after the Mutiny in 1858. In the last decade, the Australian colonies were federated into a Commonwealth, and, as the outcome of the war at the end of the Queen's life, the Union of South Africa was formed. During her reign, her subjects increased from ninety-six millions to two hundred and forty millions.

Behind the cold statistics is an epic which still waits to be written. When the Queen was a girl, slow wind-jammers stole across the Pacific, and, after long months of watching, the anxious settlers came to the shores of half-known, southern lands. There they built their rude shanties, upon the edge of the silent forest. When she was old, British steamers moved up from the Indian Ocean, through the Suez Canal, and on to the Mother England, with the produce of India and of the new southern countries. In turn, their steel bellies were filled up at the docks in the Thames with machines and clothes, glass, furniture and paper, to be carried back to the south, for the Australians and New Zealanders to buy: or to Canada, in the 'eighties, to be distributed by the two thousand eight hundred miles of railway through the grain prairies and over the Rockies, as far as the land which bore the Queen's name. When she was a child, Australia had been wild with the tales of Botany Bay. When she was eighty a city had been built upon the land which had begun as a criminal colony: a city almost as big as Manchester. English apple-trees grew, heavy with fruit, in the valleys of Tasmania.

Salmon ova from her own Deeside rivers had been taken across the world, in ice houses. The luscious fish were already being caught in the New Zealand streams by the second generation of Scottish settlers. One day at Windsor, the Queen went on to the

lawn below the South Terrace—where Elizabeth and Anne and Mary had walked—to see a game of lacrosse, played by fourteen Canadian and thirteen Iroquis Indians. The Indians placed a tomahawk on the ground at her feet as a token of their submission.

To the Queen, this conquest of the world was more picturesque than real. There was romance in the stories of trappers and soldiers, missionaries and merchants, all harnessing the wild lands of the earth to enrich her sovereignty. Her Bibles were pressed into the brown hands of the Polynesians. She sent a suit of clothes to a swaggering African King, who sent her his loin-cloth in exchange. With naïve pleasure over her power, she arranged the crowns and trophies of the subdued Indian Princes in a glass case upon the stairs of Windsor Castle. She drank colonial wine. Envoys came to her: Burmese knelt before her and placed boxes of gold and rubies at her feet.

The Queen saw these conquests in the light of a crusade. If there was chicanery, it was hidden from her. Hindus, Kaffirs, Melanesians and Maoris were dark-skinned people, in need of the Bible and the strong, just hand of British administration. She was the Sovereign chosen to guard the brown-skinned hordes of the world on their pilgrimage out of the darkness. Almost every other Briton who bothered to think about the growing Empire seemed to agree with her, and through some miracle, Turgot's morbid prophecy was not fulfilled: the little fruits did not cease to cling to the tree when they became ripe.

1875

The conquest of India and the growth of Australia and New Zealand were incongruously linked with the disintegration of the Turkish Empire. It was through the bankruptcy of Turkey and the consequent poverty of her subject princes in Egypt that it was possible for Mr. Disraeli to achieve the most melodramatic moment in his career. It was in 1875 that he bought the Khedive's shares in the Suez Canal, for four million pounds.

Few problems of the century produced so much correspondence over such a length of time as the Eastern Question. It was Britain's boast that she wished to protect Turkey from Russia, as she had done in the Crimean War. But it was also true that, while Turkey

was in a state of weakness, the British could gain influence over the countries which the Turks controlled in the Near East, thereby assuring safety for trade and shipping. In 1839 the British had landed in Aden and in 1857 they had occupied Perim. The southern gate of the Red Sea was thus safe for them. Disraeli's purchase of the Canal shares in 1875 was the final conquest in the new enterprise. When he wrote to the Queen in November, "It is just settled; you have it, Madam," he had made the greater part of her Empire safe for her. While the other European powers watched the decline of Turkey and the death of her dominion in the Mediterranean, and while the covetous sovereigns wondered what would happen to Turkey's Balkan States, Mr. Disraeli showed even greater imagination. When the news of the purchase of the Canal shares came to the Queen, she wrote: "It is entirely the doing of Mr. Disraeli, who has *very large ideas and very lofty views* of the position this country should hold. His mind is so much greater, larger, and his apprehension of things great and small so much quicker than that of Mr. Gladstone."

Mr. Disraeli's Faery was "in ecstasies." When he went down to Windsor on November 26th, he described his visit as "triumphant." What she liked most was the "blow at Bismarck," because the "terrible man" thought England's political power was dead. After dinner she was gracious, interesting and amusing. On the 30th he described "The Faery" as being "in the 10th heaven" because she had received a letter of felicitations from the King of the Belgians on "the greatest event of modern politics."

During this year the Queen had showered many favours on her Prime Minister. There was an incident in May of 1874 which shows the magnitude of his power over her. The Czar Alexander was visiting England as a compliment to the Queen, after the marriage of her son to Princess Marie. He decided to prolong his visit for two days beyond the date upon which the Queen was to leave for Balmoral. She refused to change her plans and Lord Derby, the Foreign Secretary, feared serious trouble. He wrote to Mr. Disraeli: "It will be resented by the Russians, who are as touchy as Yankees . . . it will entirely destroy whatever good result may be expected from the marriage and the visit . . . what possible excuse can we make? Not health, for if the great lady can bear 5 days of

ceremonies she can bear 7 . . . . Do try what you can to set the business right. Nobody can have managed the lady better than you have . . . .

Everybody failed to induce her to stay—even the Prince of Wales. On May 5th, after Mr. Disraeli had pleaded with her, he imagined that she was angry. He wrote to Lady Bradford “. . . . she averted her head from me—at least I fancy so—at the drawing-room to-day. . . . I have no doubt I am not in favour. I can’t help it.” But it was Mr. Disraeli who won the little conflict. Two days afterwards, the Queen wrote to him, when she had consented to stay until after the Czar’s departure, “It is for Mr. Disraeli’s sake and as a return for his great kindness that she will stop till the 20th.” In September of 1875 the Queen sent him a letter almost every day. Her favours became so embarrassing that Disraeli was sometimes obliged to refuse them. Once the Queen ordered her yacht, the *Fairy*, for him, so that he would not have to cross the Solent in the public steamer. He declined the honour because he thought that it made “an injudicious distinction” from his colleagues who were so “faithful and devoted” to him.

#### 1875-1876

After the Prince of Wales had worked for the success of the British section of the Paris Exhibition of 1878, he pleaded for recognition of the part played by the British Colonies. Through his intercession, his mother bestowed Knighthoods upon some of the colonial representatives who had crossed the world with their produce, “most liberally,” to enhance Britain’s show in Paris. The Prince’s little gesture was significant. He had talked with the merchants from his mother’s colonies and their stories of minerals and crops and herds had made him realise the potentialities of the Empire, from an economic point of view. He had visited Canada, but he had been young then and engrossed in the delights of dancing with his one thousand partners. But the journey across the Atlantic had also given him a sense of space and distance.

The *Wanderlust* was upon the Prince in 1875 when it was suggested that he should visit India. He jumped at the prospect but the Queen was not equally enthusiastic. She thought that the plan should be “*very carefully considered and weighed in the Cabinet.*”

She looked with "much anxiety and apprehension to so long and distant a voyage" and, still thinking of foreign travel in terms of the steam packets by which she crossed the channel, she deemed it a great mistake that the heir to the throne should be away from England for so long. She might die while he was abroad, she said. She thought also that his health was not robust enough for the ceremonies which would be imposed upon him. She had her own explanations of this physical weakness; he "unfortunately" took "little care of himself." To her, the Prince was still an impetuous young man, and the quality which made other people describe him as "adaptable" appeared to her as mere pliability.

The Indian visit had been among the Prince Consort's plans for his son's education. In the 'sixties, this would have been sufficient reason for the Queen's enthusiastic agreement. She had been determined enough, in 1862, in obeying Prince Albert's wish that their son should go to Egypt and to the Holy Land. The Prince Consort had been no less emphatic about the visit to India, but the Queen was not so dependent upon his memory and guidance now. The anniversary of Prince Albert's death was still celebrated, and the Mausoleum at Frogmore was still the focus for her sad devotion. But the Queen did not cling so unreasonably to her sorrow. She was willing to listen to other voices.

Queen Victoria wrote to the Crown Princess that the Indian tour was "quite against" her desire. The Queen saw little need for the visit as a political gesture and said that England was "not alarmed about India." In the end, consent was wrung from her. But she insisted that every detail of the arrangements should be placed before her. She wrote about her son's diet and of how he should behave on Sundays; she went so far as to urge that the Prince, now aged thirty-three, should be in bed at ten o'clock each evening. The Prince's position was embarrassing and there is evidence to prove Lee's statement that "the Queen's attitude often tried his temper." The old grievance was revived and the Queen resorted to her regrettable practice of communicating with her son through her Ministers. Mr. Disraeli seemed to sympathise a little, for his letters to Lady Bradford showed faint irritation over his Sovereign's wilfulness. He wrote of the Prince as "the most amiable of mortals." He added that he was "a thoroughly spoilt child" who

could not "bear being bored." "I don't much myself," confessed Disraeli.

The accumulation of difficulties and the separation from his family darkened the Prince's departure for India so much that he wrote to Lord Granville, "I left with a heavy heart and was so depressed in spirits . . . that I felt seriously inclined to return home instead of going on." His nature was sufficiently buoyant for him to recover in Paris.

The Prince's talent for friendship increased the interest of his journey. He passed through the canal (at this time it was still owned by France and the Khedive, for Mr. Disraeli had not yet made his purchase). He crowned his visit to Cairo by investing the Khedive's heir with the Order of the Star of India. The reports of the Prince's gaiety on board the *Serapis* disturbed the Queen. She feared that there was too much practical joking and not enough dignity, but her complaints did not disturb the success of the journey. The Prince celebrated his thirty-fourth birthday after he landed in Bombay. Seventy princes, encrusted with jewels, had greeted him when he arrived. On his birthday he drove among hordes of Parsees, under illuminated arches. One of the arches asked him, in lights, "How is your Royal Mother?" Another said, "Tell Mama we're happy." The Prince's graciousness soothed the maharajahs and reassured the English officials. He showed sublime tact with disgruntled potentates. One of the officials wrote that the effect of the Prince on the Chiefs was "miraculous." He came home in March. The *Serapis* was laden deep with tigers, leopards, elephants, ostriches and a bear—sixty-five mammals and almost a hundred birds in all. Orchids, gems, stuffs, and a fine grey Arab horse were among the Prince's treasures. The ship steamed up past Aden, where the Union Jack greeted him, and then passed Perim, where they saw the flag again. Then they came to the Suez Canal. The miracle had happened! In the meantime the Khedive's shares had been bought and the handcuffs of British control were already upon Egypt. In time, the Egyptians neglected their over-lord in Constantinople: the Lord of Two Continents and Two Oceans, the Shadow of the Most High, and the Protector of Kings. It was not long before lithographs of Queen Victoria were hung in the dingy business offices of Cairo and Alexandria.

The qualities which Mr. Gladstone brought to his politics were essentially English. The shores of the sea-girt isle were the limits of his imagination. But Mr. Disraeli had travelled in the Orient, from which he drew his blood. When Mr. Gladstone thought of a mountain, he thought of Snowdon. Mr. Disraeli knew Sinai and Hermon. He had wriggled through the crowded bazaars of Cairo and Jerusalem. The edge of the world was the horizon of his imagination. Insular prosperity had been the aim of the country up to 1875, but industrial wealth and safety were not enough for the imaginative Jew and, throwing his energies into the cause of an "imperial country," he exploited the chances that fell to him.

With the gifts of an oriental story-teller, Mr. Disraeli told the Queen of his dream. As Bismarck had whispered into the ear of the King of Prussia, relying upon Royal ambition for support of his schemes, so Disraeli spoke to the Queen of power in territories of which she had never even dreamed. Perhaps she was tantalised by the recollection of the King of Prussia standing in the Galerie des Glaces at Versailles and being proclaimed Emperor! Early in the new year the Queen expressed her wish that she should also assume an Imperial title, Empress of India, to be added to the ancient name of Queen. She pressed Mr. Disraeli to incorporate the plan in a Titles Bill, to be brought before the Commons at the next session. She consented to open Parliament herself, for the fourth time in fifteen years, and to announce the proposed assumption of the Imperial title from the throne.

The Queen had withdrawn to Baden-Baden to visit her half-sister's grave, but the mournful journey was interrupted by telegrams, telling her of the debates over the Titles Bill. She wrote, in her sitting-room at the Villa Hohenlohe, with letters from Mr. Disraeli and the Duke of Richmond beside her, ". . . the Duke of Somerset's language had been most ungentlemanlike and unusual in the House of Lords, disrespectful to me, and very offensive to Mr. Disraeli, insinuating that it was all a trick to get my children a higher position at the German Courts! Really too bad and too ridiculous, as it is an absolute falsehood. . . ."

The Bill passed through the Lords in April and received the Royal Assent. From this time, the Queen signed her name, *Victoria*

R. & I., upon all treaties and communications with foreign Sovereigns and upon the commissions for the officers in her army.

The aspect of the Titles Bill which affects this record lies in the relationship between the Queen, the Prince of Wales and Mr. Disraeli. The Prime Minister shouldered the Bill, but not without cynical comments on how much he was "pressed . . . by the Empress about her Crown," and the "fiery furnace" through which he went to win it for her.

Although the Prince of Wales was travelling in India, he was never consulted or even advised of his mother's ambition. An announcement in *The Times of India* gave him the news, before he returned to England. At first he denied that India was interested in the compliment and he put it "down to one of Mr. Disraeli's 'grandiose conceptions.'" With more information and the realisation of his own position in regard to the title, he declared his grievance to the Prime Minister.

"As the Queen's eldest son, I think I have some right to feel annoyed that the announcement of the addition to the Queen's title should have been read by me in the newspapers instead of (my) having received some intimation of the subject from the Prime Minister."

This time he did not accept the snub calmly. He returned from India, richer in information and knowledge, but also much strengthened in will. There were many reasons why he should feel more self-confidence now. His charm had won the day, nor was he lacking in imagination and thought when the problems of India were placed before him. He had attacked the pompousness of British officials in India and he had shown his anger over their impertinent patronage of the Indian people. "Because a man has a black face and a different religion from our own, there is no reason why he should be treated as a brute," he wrote. He was indignant over the "disgraceful habit of officers speaking of the Indians as 'niggers.'" He saw the great dangers of insular and ignorant English officials suddenly transhipped out of their element and allowed to assume power over subservient people. One British resident was recalled from India through his protestations. He

urged also that the power of the Viceroy should not be over-fettered by instructions from Downing Street. His plea was for "the man on the spot." The Prince's friendships with Indian princes endured. They visited him in London and they wrote to him, appealed to him and consulted him. He became accessible and human to them and, in turn, the problems in India became comprehensible to him.

Mr. Disraeli made a mistake in the way he attempted to soothe the Prince over the Titles Bill. He suggested that he might also "receive an addition to his titles." This attempt at consolation only made the Prince more angry. The title implied in Mr. Disraeli's offer was *Imperial Highness*. The Prince's secretary wrote an emphatic refusal, adding that if "it leaked out that such a suggestion had been made and refused by the Prince it would, though increasing his popularity, damage that of the Queen and her ministers." The Prince's cause became so public that one of his friends gave notice of a motion of censure in the House. At this point, the heir's deference for his mother made him withdraw from the fray, especially as she "took the blame on herself" for the way in which he had been treated. For the first time, the Queen apologised to her son. He replied that he would be willing to receive Mr. Disraeli "in the kindest manner possible." "I have no doubt," he concluded, "that it was an oversight on his part not letting me know of the Royal Titles Bill, though of course I looked upon it as a slight to me, and as your eldest son also to you."

## *Chapter Thirty-six*

1876

If England, France and Germany had been the only contestants for the prizes of the last century, one chapter of history would have been simplified, for dying Turkey's possessions might have been distributed without bloodshed. But there was another rival. Russia's ambitions had been no more than checked when she made her assault upon Turkey in the Crimean War. Britain's position in this competition for power in the Levant was not easy. When the Turks massacred thousands of Christians in the Balkans, the British were morally bound to protect the people of their own faith, but in diplomacy they were bound to protect the slaughterers.

In the spring of 1876, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina rose against their Turkish rulers. A few months afterwards, Servia and Montenegro supported them and war was declared on Turkey. The revolts were fostered by Russian agents and the undisciplined Balkan soldiers went into battle under Russian officers. Turkey was weakening; many of her dominions were filched from her and she was left with Bosnia, Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Albania, Epirus, Thessaly and Macedonia. The Sultan, Abdul Aziz, who wore the Order of the Garter (instituted by Edward the Third, to encourage Christian prayer, honour and chivalry), was dethroned. For a few months his nephew reigned; then came Abdul Hamid.

The long reign of "The Great Assassin" began. His was a miserable cause for England to support and the old promises became a strain on the British conscience. But the Russian lust for territory was equally disturbing. Two years of muddled purposes and suspicion between nations followed. Almost four hundred pages of *The Life of Disraeli* are devoted to the correspondence which was engendered by the Balkan shambles.

The Queen neglected India, her new title, and her son's alleged lapses, before the stories of the Turkish atrocities in the Balkans and the reports of Russia's campaign for power. In the manner of Prince Albert, she bombarded Mr. Disraeli with helpful, shrewd memoranda. She "writes every day and telegraphs every hour," he said to a friend. Her energy now was greater than his. The Queen was fifty-seven years old and her strength had not been affected by

her bereavement as much as she imagined. She was still able to walk for miles over the moors in Scotland in weather which made her ladies shiver and complain. Mr. Disraeli was seventy-two and he might have said, with Mr. Gladstone, that the "senses were closing in" on him. In January he had written to Lady Bradford, "I have just come from the Cabinet. . . . I have been, and am, a great sufferer." In June he had endured so much from his gout that he had written a depressed letter to the Queen, afraid lest he should have to "renounce the great personal happiness" of serving her. There were other changes. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had appeared in the House for the first time. The violent Radical, who was some day to become old and mature, and to echo Mr. Disraeli's own Imperial language, was still young enough to show his indignation. He had said that Disraeli "never opened his mouth without telling a falsehood." When Mr. Chamberlain first came into the House of Commons, he stood, "carefully groomed, eyeglass in eye." After a few minutes, Mr. Disraeli came in and sat down. He "put up his glass, which he seemed to hold encircled with his forefinger, so that he might be quizzing. . . ." The two looked at each other. When Mr. Chamberlain spoke of Mr. Disraeli, the older statesman thought his attack was one of the "coarsest, and stupidest assaults" he could remember. "No intellect, or sarcasm, or satire, or even invective: coarse and commonplace abuse. . . ."

Mr. Gladstone was five years younger than Mr. Disraeli, but he had also assumed the habits of an old man. He had resigned from the leadership of the Liberal Party and he had settled down to quiet study in the country, where he was sorting the thousands upon thousands of letters which had accumulated during his career. There was no hint that he would come back again as Prime Minister, as Palmerston had done, in a burst of energy towards the end of his life.

Mr. Disraeli complained of his gout, but he could not deny the success of this, the richest year in his career. He had made the sea-way safe between England and India and he had made his Queen an Empress. Earlier in 1876 he had confessed both his triumph and his age by accepting the Earldom of Beaconsfield, which he had refused when his wife was created a Peeress in her own right. Now he was able to act as Prime Minister from the less agitating atmosphere of

the House of Lords. His last appearance in the Commons was true to the picturesque legend of his career. His final speech was upon the Bulgarian atrocities. The last words he ever spoke in the House were, "What our duty is at this critical moment is to maintain the Empire of England." "He was noticed afterwards in the lobby 'in a long white overcoat and dandified lavender kid gloves, leaning on his secretary's arm' and shaking hands with a good many people." When all was over, his friend and colleague, Frederick Stanley, saw Lord Beaconsfield shedding tears.

The beginning of the new year was celebrated at Windsor. The Queen and her Minister were both masters of graciousness. They met at dinner in the Castle on New Year's Day. "On Monday I go to Windsor to dine with the Empress of India," he wrote. "The Faery is so full of the great incident, and feels everything about it so keenly that she sent me a Xmas card and signed her good wishes *Victoria Regina et Imperatrix.*"

On the first day of the new year, Queen Victoria was proclaimed Kaiser-i-Hind, Empress of India, on the Plain of Delhi. Seventy ruling chiefs and Princes, and envoys from Siam, Burma, Muscat and Khelat came for the occasion. She was saluted by the Maharajah Scindia, in the name of the Indian Princes, as Shah-in-Shah Padshahi, *Monarch of Monarchs.*

On January 1st, Windsor awakened to its old glory. At night the castle shone with a thousand lights. The Queen discarded her homely black dress; she came into the room before dinner, radiant, blazing with the jewels which the Indian Princes had given her. There was much beauty, much talk and even a hint of revelry. During dinner, Beaconsfield asked the Queen if she was wearing all the jewels the Indian Princes had sent to her. She answered, "Oh no; if you like I will have the rest brought in after dinner for you to see." And after dinner "a series of small portmanteaux of jewels" were brought into the room.

At the end of the dinner, Prince Arthur rose and proposed the health of the Empress of India. The glasses were raised and all eyes were turned towards her. She responded with a "pretty smiling bow, half a curtsey."

As the Queen grew older she might have consoled herself in the development of her eldest son. The more balanced thoughts of

middle-age were coming to him. He wrote more convincing letters and he no longer indulged in so much of the "chitter-chatter" which had annoyed Lord Beaconsfield in the early days. When the Prince went to stay at Hughenden, the Prime Minister wrote to the Queen: "The conversation was grave as well as gay, and H.R.H. maintained his part with felicity—even distinction." Beaconsfield's letters to Lady Bradford also admitted his pleasure over his guest. The Prince had "said some good things and told more," he wrote.

There were other signs of the Prince's development. In July of 1878, when there was an uproar because England was meddling with French influence in the Mediterranean and in Egypt, the Prince talked with Léon Gambetta in Paris. They arranged to lunch together, but the British Ambassador was not asked to join the party. Gambetta "spoke strongly in favour of an alliance between France and England," a subject dear to the Prince's heart. Afterwards the British Ambassador reported to Lord Salisbury that he had heard "from all quarters" that Gambetta was extremely pleased with the interview. The Ambassador was assured, he said, that the Prince of Wales acquitted himself with great skill.

With such letters of commendation arriving at the Foreign Office, the relationship between the Prince and the Government changed and his views were taken more seriously. A tangible sign of this growing respect was given in a letter from Lord Salisbury, written after the interview with Gambetta in Paris.

"I trust your Royal Highness will not think I am guilty of an intrusion if I venture, on the score of my official position, to thank your Royal Highness very earnestly for what you have done in Paris. The crisis has been one of no little delicacy, and if the leaders of the French opinion had definitely turned against us, a disagreeable and even hazardous condition of estrangement between the two countries might have grown up, which would have been very much to be regretted. Your Royal Highness's influence over Monsieur Gambetta, and the skill with which that influence has been exerted, have averted a danger, which was not incon siderable."

The Prince's eager interest in human beings—a quality which his father had not understood and therefore deplored—was above prejudice and opinion. The editor of *The Times*, who had so often derided the Court, was his guest at Marlborough House, and Sir Charles Dilke, who had attacked monarchy in the Commons, became his friend. Joseph Chamberlain, the Radical leader, who brought the provincial point of view into politics as never before, sank his prejudices when he met the Prince at Birmingham in 1874. They liked each other immediately. The simple truth was that the Prince met people with the intention of discovering the best in them. Criticism might come afterwards, but it was never the basis of his approach.

The strengthened understanding between Lord Beaconsfield and the Prince was soothing to the Queen. All three met in common anxiety and sympathy over the atrocities in the Balkans. They never knew which way the "monstrous" Bismarck was going to turn next, and they were equally perplexed by the gap between the peaceful protestations of the Czar and the warlike mien of his soldiers. The Queen wrote, "it is clear England *cannot fight* for the Turks, but she also *cannot fight against them*." This anomalous state of mind might have been as perplexing to Bismarck as his own vagaries of decision were disturbing to the British Government.

The apparent timidity of Lord Beaconsfield's Government and their failure to act against either the Russians or the Turks stirred the veteran quiet of Mr. Gladstone's retreat at Hawarden. He was working on his notes for *Future Retribution*. These notes are still among his papers, with a docket attached to them. On it he wrote: "I was called away to write on Bulgaria." This was in August of 1876. The pages of his diary show with what physical pain he wrote the pamphlet which was to protest against the failure of the Government to act. Between August 28th and September 4th, Gladstone worked upon his manuscript. One day he was forced to stay in bed until four o'clock because of his lumbago pains. Another day he read *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Soul*, and he went to church twice on Sunday. Between the periods of pain and writing he read *Waverley*, "as a treat." In these seven days of mixed suffering and contemplation, he produced the pamphlet, *The Bulgarian Horrors*

*and the Question of the East*, which "spread like fire." Forty thousand copies were sold in a few days.

The fierce sincerity of his attack made Gladstone the leader of Liberal thought again, but his high purpose was wasted on the Queen and on Lord Beaconsfield. To them Mr. Gladstone had turned the atrocities into a party question and he was using them as a Liberal spring-board from which to dive back into power. When the British Government refused to subscribe to the Berlin Memorandum, signed by Germany, Austria, Russia, France and Italy, and designed to impose certain reforms on the Turks, Gladstone saw in this a sign of the Jew's own hand. His dive into history was not as apt as Lord Beaconsfield's would have been. Mr. Gladstone drew a long bow in suggesting that the Government policy grew out of "Dizzy's crypto-Judaism." "The Jews of the east *bitterly* hate the Christians . . . ." he wrote.

The results of the Great War have changed the fortunes of the countries of the Levant so drastically that the forces behind the Eastern question of the 'seventies belong only to the history book. They have either changed so much as to be unrecognisable or they are so dead that they are one with the ruins of Baalbek and Jerash. They are of importance in this story only in so far as they affected the relationship of the Queen, the Prince, Lord Beaconsfield and Mr. Gladstone. The Balkan atrocities awakened Mr. Gladstone from his torpor and the trappings of old age were thrown aside for the campaign which led, in time, to the Liberal victory in 1880. He stood under the dripping rainclouds at Blackheath and painted a theatrical picture of the iniquities of the Turks. His was the voice of Christendom—he believed this and the people seemed to believe him too. He talked of "the flood-gates of lust" and "the dire refinements of cruelty." He attacked, with humourless, passionate invective. Perhaps it was not only because of the Turk that the people listened to him. The time for a political change was almost at hand.

On April 21st, 1877, Russian soldiers crossed the Turkish frontier. There was no doubt now of Russia's intentions. What had been talked of as a purely moral problem in British diplomacy now became cold, material anxiety over the safety of Egypt, where the new harbour of Alexandria had been built with British capital.

Britain had wavered over the moral issue for many months, but, with the Russians already across the Turkish frontier, the British Government demanded and received the promise of Russia that the countries and waterways which affected British interests should be respected. Upon this pledge Britain agreed to remain neutral. This was not enough for Mr. Gladstone. In May he proposed resolutions which would have bound Britain to join Russia against the Turks. Two hundred and twenty-three voters went with him, but three hundred and fifty-four "declined to embarrass the Government."

In the middle of July the Russians crossed the Balkans and it seemed that they would surge south and occupy Constantinople. Their progress was checked by Osman Pasha: for five months he held Plevna against them. But on December 10th Plevna fell and there seemed to be no obstacle between the Russian soldiers and Constantinople. The Queen's letters to Lord Beaconsfield, written during the months of the Turko-Russian War, show what a positive part she played in the government of the country and the framing of policy during this time. The letters did not cling so tenaciously to the personal pronoun as in the 'sixties. They showed an increasing breadth of judgment. Their characteristics, compared with other documents of the time, are her calm and foresight, and her refusal to be hoodwinked by Russia's alleged Christian crusade against the Mussulmans.

The dissensions in Parliament and the confused loyalties of party against party, provided an acid test for the growing abilities of the Prince of Wales. He had already convinced Gambetta, Beaconsfield and Salisbury of his talents. At last his mother had made the gesture for which he had waited for so many years. In June she had drawn him a little closer to her confidence by asking Lord Beaconsfield to keep him informed "of the plans and proceedings of Russia and of the extreme danger of being deceived by them." Twenty days afterwards she quoted her son's opinion in a letter to her Prime Minister. Her old fear, when he was abroad, had been lest he might talk too much. When he went to Berlin in February of 1878, she was willing that he should have a private interview with Bismarck. The questions which Bismarck asked him show that the Chancellor cared for the Prince's opinion.

Beaconsfield was also generous in his judgment of the Prince. On

one occasion he said that the Prince's opinions on foreign affairs were more to be trusted than the "feeble and formal diplomacy" of British Ambassadors to foreign Courts. On July 13th, the Queen went all the way from Windsor to London to attend her son's party in the gardens of Marlborough House. They walked about together and they had tea, "in a beautiful Indian tent." When she arrived back at Windsor again, the Queen wrote a long description of the garden party and she said that it had been "very successful." There was a subtle proof of the change in her feeling for her son when she went to see H.M.S. *Thunderer*, in the Solent. She went to the turret and she was shown a torpedo. She looked into the engine room, and although she found the ladders "rather steep," she had not forgotten her *sea legs*. In the evening there was a dinner party at Osborne and among the guests was Lord Charles Beresford. He had been the chief instigator of the frolics at Marlborough House and the inventor of the practical jokes which had imperilled the dignity of her son's journey to India. Now she thought him "very funny, . . . beaming with fun and a trifle cracky, but clever, and a good officer." This was not the only sign of the mellowness which seemed to come to her. Now, on the eve of losing Beaconsfield as a Minister, she seemed to be infused by his restraint, his calm judgment. *She* whispered the words of caution now and *she* sounded the trumpets of courage when Beaconsfield was beset by the violent abuse of Mr. Gladstone and his supporters. When he was to speak at the Mansion House, she wrote, "Try and avoid saying anything positive, nothing that could let people make a handle of it for agitation. Be firm, and act as you intended," she wrote in July. Two days before he had come up to her, at the Prince's garden party, and he had said, "The crisis has begun and I shall need all your Majesty's support." He may have written with his tongue in his cheek in the early days, but now she sustained him, in the time when he was ill and tired. On Midsummer Day he had opened the Artisans' and Labourers' buildings near Battersea Park, wearing some of the lilies which she had "so graciously and so gracefully presented to him" when he had been to see her at Windsor the day before.

When Plevna fell in December, the British Cabinet began to admit Russia's "duplicity and skill in deception." The phrase had been used by the Queen almost a year before. The Cabinet was hastily summoned on December 14th, and Lord Beaconsfield urged three measures upon the members. In view of the Russian advance he wished that Parliament should be summoned immediately. He asked for a considerable increase in the country's defence forces and that the Queen should be advised to intercede between Russia and Turkey.

Lord Beaconsfield said that there was "dead silence" when he finished speaking. Lord John Manners supported the measures, "with much energy and ability," but the Foreign Secretary held back. Lord Derby had been the most pacific of the Ministers all along, and he still seemed to feel that "any active interference in Eastern affairs by England was to be deprecated." Lord Salisbury and Lord Carnarvon were equally loth to make this compromising move in Turkey's favour. In this unsettled state, and with no prospect of decision, the Cabinet adjourned for three days.

In the interim of the week-end, the Queen made her greatest gesture of confidence in her Minister: a gesture which depended upon courage as well as affection and trust. She drove over from Windsor and lunched with Beaconsfield at Hughenden: the first time she had paid such a compliment to a Minister since 1841. She had been little more than a girl then and the Minister had been Lord Melbourne.

Once assured of what she deemed to be right, it mattered little to the Queen that Mr. Gladstone was still thundering through the provinces, holding his audiences under a spell with his talk of the perfidy of the Turks and the wickedness of the Government. She was willing to lose her crown rather than condone the action of the Russians. While the members of the Cabinet were languishing in their week-end of contemplation before the meeting on Monday, the Queen displayed her will and her favour. She went to Hughenden with Princess Beatrice, through "cheering crowds and be-flagged streets," to call upon her Minister. After luncheon the

Queen walked with the old and stooping Beaconsfield on the terrace, where Lady Beaconsfield had planted geraniums in the Florentine vases. The Queen planted a tree in the garden to celebrate the day. She admired the swans and she accepted Beaconsfield's Trentanova statue as a memorial of her happy experience.

The next Cabinet meeting was on the following Monday: a stormy affair, with neither confidence nor decision. Half the Cabinet, especially Lord Salisbury, Lord Derby and Lord Carnarvon, were arrayed against Beaconsfield. When the machinery of government failed him, he assumed the trappings of the actor. If the members of the Cabinet distrusted his purpose and judgment, and if support were withheld from him, he said that he would resign. The members of the Cabinet paused before his challenge and they gained one more day in which to meditate. News of the Prime Minister's threat reached Windsor. The Queen did not pause to consider its full meaning; she wrote hastily. In no circumstances would she "accept Lord Beaconsfield's resignation. . . ." He wrote to her next day, pointing out that even if he did resign, it was within the Queen's power to entrust him "with the formation of a new ministry."

The members of the Cabinet slept upon their differences and they came to the meeting next morning a little chastened and calmed. The Queen had told Beaconsfield to be "*very firm and decided . . . and not to give way to anyone, even if Lord Derby should wish to resign. . . .*" Her strength supported him now. She had promised him that the other Ministers would "*surely yield,*" if he would be firm, supported as he would be and had been, *all along*, by herself. Lord Derby climbed down at the threat of his chief's resignation. He wrote a note to Lord Beaconsfield and he went to see him an hour before the Cabinet meeting. He would be happy, he wrote, in his letter, if they could see their way "*out of this mess.*" "*We all want to keep together: and no one in the Cabinet will feel as I shall if circumstances separate me from my old friend and teacher in public life.*"

Lord Salisbury too seemed to be drawn more closely to his leader. The three measures were accepted. The defence forces were to be increased, Parliament was to be summoned, and the Queen was to be advised to mediate between the two countries in the hope

of arresting the destructive advance of the Russian army. Britain at last declared her will, but damage had already been done to her name by her dilatoriness and indecision. The Crown Princess wrote to the Queen of the popular talk in Germany: that England was "quite powerless, has no army, a fleet that is of no use . . . has no statesman and cares for nothing more than making money." The Crown Princess said that she longed "for one good roar of the British Lion from the housetops, and for the *thunder* of a British broadside!"

Beaconsfield wrote to Lady Bradford, "The great struggle is over, and I have triumphed." He accepted the hard won battles as "another proof" of what might be done when the Sovereign and the Minister acted together. He added, in a letter to the Queen, "Witness the Public Worship Act. Witness your Majesty's Imperial Crown. . . ." But he was tired. The confusion had been so great that it seemed like "the end of the world" to him.

During these months of Beaconsfield's anxiety, "great parties of tourists from the north and midland towns began to make it a fashion to go on high pilgrimage"<sup>1</sup> to Mr. Gladstone's house. There, "besides a fine park they saw the most interesting man in the country, and had a good chance of hearing an eloquent speech, or watching a tree fall under the stroke of his vigorous arm." The Liberal veteran was preparing for 1878, which he afterwards described as "a tumultuous year" in his life.

Lord Beaconsfield's patching up of peace in the Cabinet was no more enduring than the Turkish stemming of the Russian army. After Plevna, Sofia fell and the Russians came nearer to the coveted shores of the Bosphorus. In January of the new year the Russians entered Adrianople, and before the month was ended they stood on the beautiful coast of the Sea of Marmora, triumphant.

When the Cabinet met on January 23rd, the British fleet was ordered to Constantinople, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer was directed to give notice in the Commons of a vote of credit for six million pounds. At last Britain was to arm herself against the threat of Russian dominion in the Mediterranean. Lord Derby and Lord Carnarvon resigned after the Cabinet decided to send the

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Gladstone*, Lord Morley.

fleet to the Dardanelles, but Lord Salisbury remained on the side of his leader, in company with the majority of the Ministers. The imagination of the Commons was also stirred, and when the financial vote came before the House, the Liberal opposition floundered and died. It was not until the Russians saw the blue waters of Marmora; not until they were almost within sight of the palaces of Abdul Hamid, that the Government stirred with real vigour. Late in January, Lord Napier of Magdala was appointed to command any military expedition that might be needed.

On March 3rd the intimidated Turks signed the Treaty of San Stefano. It was a pernicious document; the death warrant of Turkey and the last gasp in her sordid and ignoble decline. But the treaty allowed for more than Turkish humiliation: there was promise of the aggrandisement of Russia which was more menacing to British interests than the nearness of the Russian soldiers to Constantinople. When the terms of the treaty became known, they seemed to be so preposterous in the eyes of Britain that Lord Beaconsfield at last displayed the ruthless decision to which the Queen had been urging him for almost a year. The confidence between them was perhaps more constructively powerful than between any Sovereign and Prime Minister in Britain's history. Once she chided him, when she felt that he had been "unable to fulfil his engagement to her." But the letter of complaint, written from Osborne in February, was accompanied by some camellias, "grown in the open air," and some primroses, his most beloved flower. The misunderstanding passed. Beaconsfield's letter to the Queen, in response to her rebuke, was charming, calm, and wholly fair to his colleagues. It set matters to right, and at the end he wrote, "Lord Beaconsfield is deeply touched by your Majesty's gracious kindness in deigning to send him flowers from your Majesty's home. Truly he can say they are 'more precious than rubies'; coming, as they do, and at such a moment, from a Sovereign whom he adores. . . ."

In March, when Prince Leopold's illness added to the Queen's dejection, Lord Beaconsfield wrote, "anxious and unhappy," about the pressure which was put upon her. He said with sincerity that, from "the bottom of his heart," he wished that he could be the Queen's secretary. He would "willingly relinquish his present exalted post" to soothe her and to lessen the weight of the troubles

and anxieties which beset her. It "would not only be an honour; it would be happiness of the greatest." He had promised "devotion" in the letter which he had written when he first came to her as her Prime Minister in 1868. At that time the devotion had been given with the wise smile of the diplomat. In 1878, it was given with all his heart.

When the Cabinet met in March, Beaconsfield cajoled the still recalcitrant Ministry into calling out the Reserve and sanctioning the transport of seven thousand native troops from India to Malta. The Lords accepted the measure without demur and the Commons passed it with a healthy majority of 121. But Lord Derby fell by the way. He had resigned in January when the British fleet was ordered to Constantinople but had come back as Foreign Secretary. He resigned once more, at the renewed brandishing of the British sword. This last action covered him with Royal blame and disfavour. Princess Alice had written to her mother from Darmstadt of the opinion in Europe. She had said that Lord Derby shook the confidence of "all the world" in Britain's policy by his vacillation and indecision. When Lord Derby's resignation was announced the Crown Princess wrote in high delight, because one could "hold up one's head again." The Queen was more gentle. She knew his "health to be bad," and she wrote of "poor Lord Derby's extraordinary state," but she felt that he "*must go.*"

Lord Salisbury assumed Lord Derby's place as Foreign Secretary and he straightway infused the foreign policy with life and confidence. His first strong action was the drafting and publication of an exhaustive dispatch declaring the diplomatic position of Britain. He demanded that the iniquitous Treaty of San Stefano should be submitted to the judgment of the European Powers. The Emperor of Russia equivocated over the proposed changes to the terms of the treaty and Lord Salisbury took matters into his own hands. He arranged a convention with Sultan Abdul Hamid which bound Britain to protect the depleted dominions of Turkey, on the understanding that Cyprus was occupied as a base. This he followed up with a convention with Austria, allowing her to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the promise that she would support the British view upon Bulgarian affairs. Russia consented to have these clauses put forward in the framing of the treaty which was considered and

agreed upon by the Powers at the Berlin Congress, in June and July of 1878.

Recognition of the talents of the Prince of Wales increased during the agitating negotiations of 1877 and 1878. Both Lord Salisbury and Lord Beaconsfield were convinced that it would not be a mistake to allow him more knowledge of the inner negotiations of the Government. The Queen also discussed questions with him, none more candidly than the conference of the Powers in Berlin which was to apportion the spoils of the war. On May 28th, the Prince wrote to his mother after talking with Corry, the Prime Minister's trusted secretary. The Prince said that "Lord Beaconsfield was the only man who could go" to Berlin. However clever Lord Salisbury was, the fiasco which had rewarded his attempts at the Conference in Constantinople made it plain that "he really would not do." The Prince continued in his letter to his mother, "I understand that President Bismarck particularly begs that there should be no *ad referendum*.

"Under these circumstances, it strikes me more forcibly than ever that the Prime Minister is not only *the* right man to represent us at the Congress but the *only* man who can go, as he will show Russia and the other Powers that we were really in earnest. . . . If a Congress takes place, it must be the *last* one on the Eastern question—which must be finally settled and I trust for ever. . . . Now, do let me implore you to urge Lord Beaconsfield to go. . . . It struck me that if you wrote a mem. which was to be laid before the Cabinet—in which you expressed your positive desire that Lord Beaconsfield should go—the matter would then be settled. . . . Of course this letter is only intended for you, and for nobody else's eyes. Excuse my having written on the subject, but it is one in which I take such interest, that I cannot help doing so."

The Prince's plan did not appeal to the Queen immediately. She wrote to her son, ". . . you know that Lord Beaconsfield is seventy-two and a half, is far from strong, and that he is the firm and wise head and hand that rules the government, and who is my great support and comfort, for you cannot think how kind he is to me, how attached! His health and life are of *immense value* to me and the country, and should on no account be risked. . . ."

The Queen relented and Beaconsfield went with Lord Salisbury

to represent Britain at the Congress. He travelled slowly, pausing during the journey of four days so that he should arrive "quite fresh." "In all his troubles and perplexities," he wrote to the Queen, "he will think of his Sovereign Lady, and that thought will sustain and inspire him."

Lord Beaconsfield arrived in Berlin about eight o'clock in the evening, and after he had dined he waited upon Prince Bismarck. He had not seen the Chancellor for fifteen years. Beaconsfield was an older man: he was bent, and his eyes seemed tired and lustreless when in repose. Bismarck, too, had grown massive and a little tired. The giant of six-foot-two, the "tall, pallid man, with a wasplike waist," of fifteen years ago, was now "extremely stout." Beaconsfield described him thus to the Queen. His face was ruddy and he was growing a silvery beard. The Prince of Wales echoed the wish of many a man when he wrote to the Prime Minister, "How I should have liked to have seen him and you together!"

The first serious interview between Bismarck and Beaconsfield lasted for an hour and a half. The second talk was, according to Beaconsfield, a "monologue; rambling, amusing egotistical autobiography." Beaconsfield did not guess the object of the second interview, but Odo Russell had warned him that it was probably to ascertain how "squeezable" he was. In view of this, Beaconsfield did "not open on any point."

The Chancellor said of Beaconsfield, "Der alte Jude, das ist der Mann!" The implication was true, for Beaconsfield slowly drew the interest and the emotions of the Congress about himself. When he sat next to Bismarck at dinner he listened to Rabelasian monologues and "endless revelations of things he ought not to mention." Lord Beaconsfield complained again and again of his tiredness. Of evening parties, he said, "I begin to die at ten o'clock and should like to be buried before midnight." One night at dinner Bismarck threw care to the winds, and he assured Beaconsfield that he ought "never to trust Princes or courtiers." His illness, he assured him, was not from the French war, but because of the "horrible conduct of his Sovereign." He went on in "such a vein" that Beaconsfield at last bethought himself of the Faery at Windsor and told Bismarck that he served one who "was the soul of candour and justice," one who was loved by her Ministers.

The business of the Congress wore on. Britain had already declared the terms which would safeguard her interests in the Near East. Russia struggled against the treaty, but in the end she surrendered. Once more, Beaconsfield played an actor's trick, when it seemed that Russia might falter and cause the Congress to fall to pieces. He ordered a special train to be in readiness, to carry Lord Salisbury and himself back to Calais. If he had boarded the train, the only result could have been war between Russia and Britain.

Bismarck was alarmed, and he hurried to Beaconsfield's hotel.

"Is this really the ultimatum of England?" asked Bismarck.

"Yes, my Prince, it is," Beaconsfield replied.

"Where do you dine to-night?" was the next question. "I wish you could dine with me."

Beaconsfield ate at Bismarck's house. They did not talk of politics at the table: Lord Beaconsfield merely "ate and drank a great deal." Afterwards, when Princess Bismarck and her daughters retired, the two men smoked vigorously. Beaconsfield vowed that the smoking had given "the last blow to his shattered constitution," but he felt it to be necessary.

For an hour and a half they talked. That night, before he went to bed, Beaconsfield received the news of Russia's acceptance of the treaty. In the morning he was able to telegraph to the Queen, "Russia surrenders, and accepts the English scheme for the European frontier of the Empire, and its military and political rule by the Sultan."

The Queen's answer was telegraphed across Europe: "It is all due to your energy and firmness."

The Prime Minister came home to the welcome which London gives to heroes. But he was increasingly tired and he returned to an empty house. The endless receptions and attacks of gout had broken him. There was honour—peace with honour—for what it was worth to a lonely man.

When Lord Beaconsfield went to Osborne, after a brief rest, the Queen found him "in excellent spirits." She gave him the Garter, but she did not feel that this was enough. "Would he not accept a Marquisate, or Dukedom *in addition?*" He refused the added honours. Everybody was delighted, it seemed, except Mr.

Gladstone. The Queen told Beaconsfield that Gladstone was "frantic," but this only added a touch of fun to the victory.

In Berlin, Bismarck contemplated the only three photographs in his private room. They were, he said, his *Sovereign*, his *wife* and his *friend*.

## *Chapter Thirty-eight*

1878-1880

If the energies and talents which Lord Beaconsfield devoted to the Eastern question had been spared for the building up of the Empire, the history of India and Africa might present less dark pages. When he was a fledgling in politics, Beaconsfield had imagined an Imperial Parliament and an Empire bound together with the strengthening elements of trade and co-operation in Government. He had talked of great Empire conferences, but when he came into power, he found that Britons were pre-occupied with affairs nearer home. The Eastern question, the malefactions of the Irish, the cynical campaign of Bismarck, and electoral and social reforms kept the British Government busy. They had enough to frown over in the men they already knew, without caring for Zulus, Hindus and Maoris.

The tumult over the Berlin Congress had barely died when a fresh danger threatened Britain's peace. The Russians had not confined their ambitions to conquest over Turkey. Peter the Great was said to have charged Russia, in his will, to march through Central Asia, Persia and Afghanistan and make India her own. The Russians had remembered the will of the Father of the Fatherland. They had been disappointed in their thrust through the Balkans, into Turkey, but there was still Peter's way to follow. In July of 1878, Russian troops passed through Turkestan to the borders of Afghanistan. Here they paused, perilously near to the Indian border. A Russian mission followed and a convention was signed with the Amir. Afghanistan became a corridor between Russian influence and British territory. When Britain proposed that the Amir should also receive a British mission, to counteract the Russian influences, he was so elated by his new friendship that he not only refused to receive the members of the British mission, but ordered his soldiers to arrest their advance, at the entrance to the Khyber Pass. After this impertinence the British Government sent the Amir an ultimatum which was ignored. On November 21st British forces advanced through the passes, and, while Gladstone and his supporters wailed against the Tory lust for war, General Roberts routed the Afghans at Peiwar Kotal. Another

division held the Khyber Pass, a third occupied Pishin, and, early in the new year, reached Kandahar. The Amir retreated, begging the Emperor of Russia to aid him. The plea was ignored, and the Amir withered and died in the ignominy of exile. His son succeeded as Amir, and at first he seemed to welcome the British mission and the control which was forced upon him. But the British were still children in dealing with the undercurrents of intrigue in the East. Six weeks after the members of the mission were established in Kabul, Afghane soldiers massacred them in the Residency. The Amir did not raise a finger in their defence. Again General Roberts led his soldiers, this time through the Kurran Pass, to Kabul and to victory. The Amir fled to the British camp and he was sent to India.

The next eruption was more interesting to the Prince of Wales. At the end of 1876 his friend, Sir Bartle Frere, was appointed Governor of the Cape of Good Hope and High Commissioner for South Africa. His duty was to promote federation between the African States, but when his steamer arrived at Cape Town, early in 1877, he came upon so many enmities and plots that his peaceful plans became a farce. In September he sent a dispatch to England in which he said he feared that war with the Zulus was imminent. There were only six thousand of the Queen's forces in the country, and he asked for two more battalions of infantry. The threat of war with the Zulus was not all. Three months after his arrival, the Boer Republic of the Transvaal was annexed to the British Crown. The sinister forces which met in the South African War of 1899-1902 were already at work. Boer, Briton and Kaffir were to struggle through many bloody conflicts before South Africa was to enjoy peace. But the magnitude of these forces was not understood in Downing Street, in 1878.

The Prince of Wales wrote to Sir Bartle Frere continually during the unrest in Africa. Nor did he allow friendship to be satisfied with mere sympathy, for he was in continual touch with the Prime Minister on behalf of "good, excellent Sir Bartle."

The great King Cetewayo was the defiant black Napoleon of the Zulus. He was a nephew of Dingaan and Chaka, and Chaka had been the creator of Zulu warfare. Cetewayo was not a dim-minded savage, blundering in wrath against his enemies. He had an old

feud with the Boers for the possession of the land between the Buffalo and Pongola Rivers, and when the British Government annexed the Transvaal they inherited this feud with the territory. Cetewayo planned a bigger war. It was not the end of his dreams—that the stretch of country between the rivers should be his. He saw the dark tide of millions of black people, rising to expel the white man from Africa for ever. It was against this formidable dream that Sir Bartle Frere had to make his plans. Cetewayo had made a raid into Natal. Frere sent him an ultimatum, demanding reparations, but the challenge was ignored. Without authority from the Cabinet, Frere ordered Lord Chelmsford, who commanded the British troops in Natal, to march against the defiant Cetewayo. On January 22nd, 1879, eight hundred white soldiers and almost five hundred natives were slaughtered at Isandhlwana. Reinforcements were sent out to the Cape, but also a dispatch which censured Frere for exceeding his instructions. Again there are proofs of the Prince's loyalty to his friends. He wrote to Lady Frere, assuring her that he had "never ceased exonerating Lord Chelmsford from the blame" of Isandhlwana, and that he "sincerely and earnestly" hoped that her husband "would not think of resigning." A few days later he repeated his assurances to Frere. "You may be assured that my thoughts are continually with you . . . I only earnestly hope that you will stick to your post, and not think of resigning. . . ."

But Frere and Chelmsford were on the other side of the world. The Cabinet was at hand, ready for its full burden of blame. Lord Beaconsfield drooped under the weight, and his personal hold over the country suffered one more strain. "Prince Hal is sanguine—nay, sure—that Bartle F. and Chelmsford will come out triumphant," he wrote. "I wish I shared his convictions. . . ."

Once more the Queen roused Beaconsfield with encouragement. ". . . Show a bold front to the world," she urged him. At every moment of danger in her reign she had pleaded for an increase of her army. The lesson was again pressed home by the calamity of Isandhlwana. She told Lord Beaconsfield he "must not be down-hearted for a moment," but she saw in the appalling news "a lesson never to reduce our forces . . . with our enormous Empire, we must always be prepared for such contingencies . . ."

She was gracious to him, even as she scolded. Primroses arrived from Osborne, tied into little bunches. The gardener had been told to send them every week. The Queen received in return a birthday letter, more heavily laden with humility and flattery than any her Minister had sent her before. He talked of the "strangeness of his destiny," which allowed him to be the "servant of one so great." He hoped that the "bright shadow of the coming hours" would "illumine her with their happiness, sustain her in her state and touch with an enchanting ray the hallowed influences of her hearth."

There were moments in which the Queen was frigidly sane. In the intervals of calm and prosperity she was willing to languish beneath her Ministers' compliments, but, in time of anxiety, she was not deluded. The Cabinet decided that Frere was no longer capable of coping with the South African complications and they wished to send Sir Garnet Wolseley to govern Natal and the Transvaal, thus relegating Sir Bartle Frere to the limited sphere of the Cape Colony. Perhaps Beaconsfield's subtlety was on the wane: perhaps he misjudged his Sovereign at times, for the fulsome birthday letter was inopportune. The day after she received it, she wrote a letter which is an example of the calm which the Queen could muster in a time of crisis. She saw the South African question not merely as a local affair between Boers, Britons and Zulus; nor was it a problem to be hastily smoothed away by the Cabinet. Her detachment helped her to place the question before Beaconsfield perhaps more clearly than he saw it himself. She defended Frere and she deprecated the plan to send out a superior officer to take over his control of Natal and the Transvaal. She wrote:

".... Whatever fault may have been committed in declaring (perhaps) too hastily, war, Sir B. Frere seems to have succeeded, by his personal influence, in conciliating those important portions of the Colonies, who were considered to be disaffected. To reward his efforts therefore by sending out an officer with the powers proposed, instead of encouraging him, will be a public mark of want of confidence—at a moment of great difficulty—which will have a most disastrous effect both at home and abroad; and will make it almost impossible for any public man to serve his

country if on the 1st misfortune occurring he is to be thrown over!"

In this paragraph, the Queen laid down a principle which might have saved many a misfortune if it had been made law in Whitehall. The next paragraph of her letter to Beaconsfield reveals the fullness of her experience and the historical sense which caused her to see all contemporary problems in relation to her memory of forty years of government.

".... the Queen most strongly protests against the use of private information, than which nothing more injurious to discipline and good government can exist. This was one of the causes of our suffering in the Crimea and led to every sort of evil. No Commander or Governor can stand against or submit to that; and the Queen can only attribute this to the inexperience of public life in some of his [the Prime Minister's] colleagues."

Her letter concluded with a plan less drastic than the one proposed by the Cabinet. ". . . send somebody out with messages to Sir B. Frere and Lord Chelmsford," she wrote, "to explain exactly what the Govt. wish and what they object to. But do not upset everything—which will be the case if an officer, whoever he may be, is sent out with the powers proposed." The Queen said that she would sanction the proposal if her "warnings" were disregarded, but she would not *approve* of it. The Cabinet proceeded in spite of her agitation, and Wolseley sailed for Africa.

Sir Garnet Wolseley arrived in Africa in the midst of a renewed battle between Lord Chelmsford's soldiers and the Zulus. In this conflict Chelmsford led his men more gloriously, and Wolseley had little to do in the time that followed except tidy up the shambles of war and reorganise the country into the forms of peace. On July 4th Chelmsford's soldiers devastated Cetewayo's army before the Zulu King's own kraal.

On September 3rd Lord Chelmsford arrived at Balmoral with a Zulu shield for Queen Victoria. It had been taken out of Cetewayo's own Shield House at Ulindi and, like a knight of old, Chelmsford brought his trophy home and placed it at his Sovereign's feet.

Queen Victoria made a characteristic gesture of consolation to

Sir Bartle Frere: she sent him a copy of the new volume of the Prince Consort's life, inscribed by her own hand. When Sir Bartle was obliged to resign, after the Liberal victory of 1880, the Prince of Wales gave him another proof of friendship by inviting him to be his guest in Scotland.

There were little flashes of compensation in the distress over Afghanistan and Natal. In November Beaconsfield went to Sandringham, where "Prince Hal was very gracious, agreeable, and in high feather; and very proud of having four Knights of the Garter at dinner." And there were occasional wisps of news from Europe which showed that Beaconsfield's triumph in Berlin had not been forgotten. Bismarck wrote two or three friendly letters and Lord Odo Russell wrote to Beaconsfield's secretary on November 23rd to say that it was "most remarkable and refreshing to see how the Oriental policy of H.M.G., in, and since, the Congress, has elevated England in the eyes of the Continent."

1879-1880

Towards the end of November, Mr. Gladstone began his Midlothian "pilgrimage of passion." With the "black art" of oratory, perhaps richer in him than in any other politician of his time, he travelled over the country like an evangelist possessed. The strange tides of public sympathy and allegiance to leaders can never be explained. They change and they turn by no known laws and with little semblance of reason. The great, intense figure of Mr. Gladstone seemed to dominate every audience. The people came in thousands to hear him, from as far away as the Hebrides. The fierceness of his speeches, the talk of *freedom*, of *justice*, and of *humanity* cast a spell over Carlisle, Hawick, Edinburgh and Glasgow. The hills in some places were white with snow and bitter winds chilled the streets of the towns. Gladstone went on, from place to place, like a prophet.

At Hughenden, Beaconsfield was fingering the souvenirs of his long life. He did not heed a word of what Gladstone said: nor did he read a word of what he wrote. He had also been near Hawick once, to see Sir Walter Scott. That was many years ago, when he was the young, little known Benjamin Disraeli, eager and undaunted. Now he was old, tired, and solitary. Not even power could lessen

the pathos and tragedy of his loneliness. In September, when he had displeased the Queen because he did not wish to receive Lord Chelmsford on his return from Natal, he had written a pathetic letter to Lady Ely. "I love the Queen—perhaps the only person in this world left to me that I do love . . . it worries me and disquiets me, when there is a cloud between us . . ."

On November 26th Beaconsfield went to see his Sovereign. "What nerve! What muscle! What energy!" he wrote to Lady Bradford, describing the Queen. He was, he said, "very deficient in all three." He had not read "a single line" of the "row" in Gladstone's campaign. It was "wearisome rhetoric" and "a waste of powder and shot."

But Gladstone was speaking in a language the people understood. They listened to his beautiful voice:

*Remember that the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan among the winter snows, is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own. Remember that He who has united you as human beings in the same flesh and blood, has bound you by the law of mutual love; that mutual love is not limited by the shores of this island, is not limited by the boundaries of Christian civilisation. . . .*

Lord Morley writes that by these speeches, "Men were recalled to moral forces that they had forgotten." But there were many who were not cowed by Gladstone's oratory. Some people imagined that his performances were pure acting, as had been said of Beaconsfield. But they were actors of different schools. Beaconsfield was of the French school, with technique as its basis. Once when he wished to answer a statement in the House, he held up what seemed to be a note, from which he read and quoted. He crumpled it in his hand at the right moment and threw it away. Somebody picked it up afterwards, and found that it was a blank slip of paper. Gladstone was of the violent, heroic school and some were left cold by his oratory. It is said that when Parnell paid his only visit to Hawarden he sat next to Gladstone's daughter at dinner. As an aid to conversation, she asked him whom he considered to be the greatest actor he had ever seen.

"Without doubt, your father," was his answer.

The Queen was fully conscious of the perils which lay in the Liberal campaign. The stories of Gladstone's victories were told to her and she was obliged to contemplate a weakening Conservative cause. In June of 1879 Beaconsfield was ill. When the Queen summoned him, he could not "even move." He was weak and could scarcely write to his beloved friends. In August he complained to Lady Bradford of the Lord Mayor's banquet. He could "eat nothing." He had to get up "with a confused brain and exhausted body" to make his speech. In September he urged the Queen to realise the advantages there would be in having a younger Minister who could "hasten to her at critical moments!" This, he confessed, he could not do.

For five days the Queen watched these miserable signs of the end of her beloved Minister's career. Gladstone's high-falutin phrases were ringing through the provinces. He was well and strong. The danger was obvious and the Queen expressed her fears and her will in a letter which she wrote to Lady Ely on September 1st. She wished that Sir Henry Ponsonby could "*get at some of the Opposition,*" as the Prince Consort's secretary and Stockmar had once done. They had given discreet, whispered warnings to the Opposition of what they might expect from the Queen if they came into power. She was a constitutional monarch, subject to the dictates of Parliament, but when she set down her views of the situation, she wrote like a grand despot of a less enlightened regime. She wished the principal people of the Opposition to know that there were "*certain things*" to which she would *never* consent:

"1. Any lowering of the position of this country by letting Russia have her way in the East, or by letting down our Empire in India and in the Colonies. This *was* done under Mr. Gladstone, quite *contrary* to Lord Palmerston's *policy*, which, whatever faults he had, *was always for keeping up England*, which of late years had *quite* gone down, so that we were *despised abroad*.

"2. That I would never give way about the *Scotch Church*, which is the real and true stronghold of Protestantism.

"*These* are points which I *never* could *allow* to be trifled with, and I could have *no* confidence in any men who attempted this. Our position in India, and in the Colonies, *must* be *upheld*. I wish to

*trust my Government whoever it is, but they should be well aware beforehand I never could if they intended to try and undo what has been done.*

"In the same way I never could take Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Lowe as my Minister again, for I never COULD have the slightest particle of confidence in Mr. Gladstone *after* his violent, mischievous, and dangerous conduct for the past three years, nor could I take the *latter* after the very offensive language he used three years ago against me."

".... I never could take Sir C. Dilke as a Minister."

Early in February of 1880 the Queen opened Parliament for the last time with Lord Beaconsfield as her Prime Minister. He had pleaded with her to appear, since this would perhaps be the end of his Ministry. The Queen answered him from Osborne; this time she would make the *sacrifice*. The session opened in the wake of disasters almost as poignant as the threat of Beaconsfield's defeat in the coming elections. His Ministry had fought through four wars and four wretched harvests. There was gloom among the people: trade was feeble: there were poverty and unemployment, and the Irish were hungry.

At the end of March Queen Victoria went to Darmstadt. Her daughter, Princess Alice, had died in December of 1878, and the Queen wished all the more to be present at the Confirmation of her granddaughters. From Darmstadt the Queen went to Baden-Baden. It was there, on April 2nd, that she received the *terrible* telegram which told her of the Liberal victory at the elections and of the inevitable defeat of her Minister.

At first the Queen closed her heart against all advice and reason. She would have "nothing to do with Mr. Gladstone," whose conduct, since 1876, had been "one series of violent, passionate invective against and abuse of Lord Beaconsfield." She said that Mr. Gladstone *caused* the Russian war.

For the first time in the Queen's reign her sons took their part as advisers in the formation of her Government. In the turbulent changes of 1868 and 1874 the Prince of Wales had been abroad and unable to be more than an onlooker. Now he threw himself into the discussion with foresight which had come to him as the fruit of

his experience and travel. Lord Beaconsfield had described him, only a few months before, as "one who has seen everything and knows everybody." This was almost true. The Prince knew men like Dilke and his friend Gambetta: he had entertained and acknowledged such men as Delane and Chamberlain whom his mother did not like. While the Queen clung to the old regime, desperately afraid of the political upheaval which menaced her peace of mind, her sons seemed to be able to gauge public feeling and to understand the mysterious changes which were coming at the end of the century. The Duke of Connaught, then married and living at Bagshot Park, wrote to his mother on April 11th, "I know how strongly you feel against the line that the Liberals have taken up these last three years. . . . It is indeed very hard for you to bear, dearest Mama, but I know how nobly you can sacrifice your own feelings at the call of duty. I can't understand what is to be done with Mr. Gladstone if he is not to be in the new Ministry; won't he be a terrible thorn in their side out of office?" The Prince of Wales wrote letters almost every day to his mother's secretary, and he communicated with Lord Hartington and Lord Granville.

There was one unfortunate influence near to the Queen. Her youngest son, Prince Leopold, was as violent in his dislike of Mr. Gladstone as his mother, and he encouraged her antipathy. The Prince of Wales openly acknowledged this disadvantage. His secretary wrote to Lord Granville, "The Prince of Wales feels sure that if the Queen would only look upon Mr. Gladstone as a friend instead of as the enemy of Her Majesty and the Royal Family, which Prince Leopold deliberately delights in persuading her he is, she will find him all she could wish." Both Lord Granville and Lord Hartington agreed, and urged that Mr. Gladstone was the only man who could form a Government.

The Prince of Wales said that "nothing could be nicer" than the way in which Mr. Gladstone was speaking of the Queen during this unfortunate time of indecision. He had said "how much he felt for her in the difficult position she was placed in" and that he would do all he could to "meet the Queen's wishes and be conciliatory in every possible way." The Prince ended his letter to his mother's secretary, "I am strongly of the opinion that the Queen should send for Mr. Gladstone. Far better that she

should take the initiative than that it should be forced upon her."

The Queen's stubbornness went hand in hand with sturdy frankness. When she sent for Lord Hartington, she talked to him of Mr. Gladstone's "violence and bitterness." She thought that he had passed the "ordinary bounds of opposition," and she said that she had no confidence in him. Lord Hartington asked her if he might repeat any part of the frank conversation to Mr. Gladstone. The Queen said that he might, for she would "say the same to Mr. Gladstone himself, if she saw him." Again the young Victoria ruled England; the girl who had called the Duke of Wellington a rebel and refused to allow her husband in the room when she was interviewing her Ministers. A flash of the impetuosity of the 'forties came into the scene. But it passed. The grim allegiance to her constitutional responsibilities prevailed, and when Mr. Gladstone came to her she received him with "perfect courtesy." Gladstone acknowledged this in his diary for the day. It was the courtesy, he said, "from which she never deviates."

When they had discussed the formation of the Ministry, the Queen said to him, "I must be frank with you, Mr. Gladstone." She recalled the Midlothian speeches which had caused her concern and pain. Gladstone replied that he considered all violence and bitterness "to belong to the past." He did not deny that he had used "very strong language."

When one turns from the Queen's record of the interview to the pages of Mr. Gladstone's diary, there is an additional remark. Gladstone wrote:

*With regard to the freedom of language I had admitted, she said with some good-natured archness, "But you will have to bear the consequences," to which I entirely assented. She seemed to me, if I may so say, "natural under effort." All things considered, I was much pleased. I ended by kissing Her Majesty's hand.*

Mr. Gladstone's new Parliament met at the end of April, with gloomy prospects for the Queen. She wrote to the German Empress that Mr. Gladstone's behaviour to her had been "very respectful," but she had also been obliged to accept the *very advanced Radicals*, Sir Charles Dilke and Joseph Chamberlain, in important offices. Lord Granville had assured her, through her secretary, that the Radicals were not as truculent as she feared. He thought the Government to be "like bread sauce—made up of two substantial elements." "The few pepper corns are very obvious," he said, "and perhaps give a little flavour but do not affect the character of the food." No solace of this kind could help the Queen to accept Sir Charles Dilke, after his impertinent comments about her in the Commons. Providing that she should not be obliged to meet the new Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, the Queen consented to his appointment, but she shrewdly tied his hands by asking for a letter from him, admitting his error and promising his good behaviour in the future. When the letter arrived she made a copy before returning it to Lord Granville.

Mr. Gladstone tried to calm the Queen in regard to Mr. Chamberlain, the Unitarian who was to be President of the Board of Trade. Mr. Chamberlain was "very pleasing and refined in feelings and manner," he told her, and he had never spoken against her or against her family.

Both the Queen and Mr. Gladstone were mellowing and the calm of age and wisdom softened the first interview when he went to see her at Windsor on April 28th. She found him *courteous throughout*, grateful for the way in which she received his proposals and repeatedly asking whether he did not weary her.

The Queen began the five years of Gladstone's administration with attempts at friendliness. They could talk over domestic legislation without disagreement, but Mr. Gladstone had no interest in foreign affairs, a subject in which the Queen revelled. Also, he was unable to see that the problems of the Empire could not be treated as moral issues, divorced from the everyday weaknesses of human nature. "I do believe that the Almighty has

employed me for His purposes," was the tenor of his thought and addresses.

There was no longer as much force in Gladstone's hand as in his voice. Beaconsfield had ruled the Cabinet with a ceremoniousness which Lord Rosebery once described as "majestic." Mr. Gladstone had also been *majestic*, during his Midlothian campaign, when his speeches had been full of promises. But the story was different with the responsibilities of power. Britain's hold on Afghanistan was weakened, and the Turks tried to wriggle out of the promises they had made in the Treaty of Berlin. Relations with the Porte became so strained that the Queen was afraid that Britain was coming "nearer and nearer to war." She displayed a little more vision than the Cabinet by pointing out the dangers of arousing Turkey. The Turks had it in their power, she wrote, to rouse the Mussulmans in India. She feared that this was not sufficiently considered by the Government.

There was weakness too in the conduct of affairs in South Africa—weakness which led to the disaster of Majuba in the following year. Confederation seemed to be impossible and the Transvaal Boers once more tried their strength in favour of independence. The Basutos also rebelled, encouraging other tribes to follow. All were subdued, but the peace which resulted was no more than an expensive interlude.

There was every reason why Britain should cling to the Transvaal. Sir Garnet Wolseley had written of the country in the previous year as rich in minerals. Gold had already been found and there was little doubt that more valuable fields would be discovered. Wolseley had been clever in seeing the solution of the Boer problem in the minerals. The gold mines would bring thousands of British people to the Transvaal, he said, reducing the disgruntled Boers to a minority. Mr. Gladstone lacked this optimism and regretted the cost and trouble of retaining the country. He confessed his own bewilderment when he said, "I have always regarded the South African question as the one great unsolved and perhaps insoluble problem of our colonial system."

Few soldiers or politicians have denied Gladstone's responsibility for the failure to pacify the races in South Africa. When Beaconsfield was in power, the Liberals had attacked the militant policy of

Sir Bartle Frere, and Gladstone had pleaded for magnanimity in dealing with the Boers and Zulus. But when the reins were in his hands, the magnanimity proved to be nothing but weakness. There were not enough British soldiers in the country to intimidate the Boers or to substantiate the boast Wolseley had made to them . . . . that "The Vaal River would flow backwards through the Drakensberg sooner than the British would be withdrawn from the Transvaal."

The Queen and the Prince of Wales watched the weakened military forces in Africa with anxiety which was justified in February of 1881, when the Boers devastated the Natal army and killed its commander, in the battle of Majuba Hill. Mr. Gladstone was forced to change his theme, and to strengthen the defences in South Africa. General Roberts sailed with reinforcements and Britain's honour was patched up. But she had been punished for her weakness, for she was *obliged* to sanction the independence of the Boers under the suzerainty of Great Britain.

The Queen clung tenaciously to her old antipathy. She had not always disliked Mr. Gladstone. At the time of the Prince Consort's death he "had entered most into her feelings." She had thought his conduct in 1861 to be "beautiful, noble, touching to the very last degree." Mr. Gladstone had been equally impressed by the "firm texture and elasticity of her mind and her marked dignity and strength of character."

In 1880, the Queen's one happy recollection of Gladstone was dead. She ignored her constitutional promises and wrote to Lord Beaconsfield, saying that she *never* wrote to Gladstone "except on formal official matters," and that she looked always to Beaconsfield "for ultimate help." In July, Gladstone wrote in his diary that the Queen was "as ever perfect in her courtesy," but, as to confidence, she held him now "at arm's length."

All through the year the Queen wrote letters of protest against the Radical policy which struck at the "*root and existence* of the Constitutional Monarchy." She wrote to Lord Granville:

"The Queen herself can *never* have *any confidence* in the men who encourage reform for the sake of alteration and pulling down what exists and what is *essential* to the stability of a Constitutional

Monarchy. A *Democratic Monarchy* . . . . she will not consent to belonging to. Others must be found if that is to be, and she thinks we are on a dangerous and doubtful slope which may become too rapid for us to stop, when it is too late.

"The Queen is all for improvement and moderate reform of abuses, but not merely for alteration's and reform's sake, and not . . . . because the present 'House of Commons is pledged to Administrative Reform.' . . . . The Queen thinks, from what Mr. Gladstone and his private Secretaries write, that Mr. G. will require very long rest."

In September the Queen wrote again. The indignities of the proceedings in the Commons, the vacillation and the personal abuse depressed her when she read the accounts each day. She assured Lord Granville that the House was becoming "like one of the Assemblies in a Republic . . . . the way in which the present House of Commons is allowed to dictate and arrogate to itself the power of the executive, disregarding both the *House of Lords* and the *Crown*, OUGHT to be firmly and strongly resisted. . . ."

The Queen's only consolation was in the occasional visits of Lord Beaconsfield. He drove over from Hughenden three times between the day of his fall and the end of the year, to stay with her. He came first in May and found her dismal over the troubles of the country. But the clouds were dispelled by dinner time and, sitting next to him, she said, "I feel so happy that I think what has happened is only a horrid dream." He had not bothered to tell her then that he was working on *Endymion*, his last book. Week after week he had been alone at Hughenden, sometimes walking out with a stick, looking "very ill," sometimes pausing to write to her, "Madam, and most beloved Sovereign," sometimes opening the letters she sent back to him, signed, "Ever your affectionate and grateful friend."

*Endymion* was finished in October and on the 28th Beaconsfield wrote to tell the Queen of his venture. He prayed that he should be allowed to send a copy to one, "who is the Sovereign not only of my person, but of my heart."

1880-1881

When Mr. Gladstone was to speak at the Lord Mayor's banquet in November, the Queen wrote to him, "extremely anxious" that there should be the utmost caution on the part of all the speakers, especially of himself. A word too much in the after-dinner speeches might do "irreparable mischief." She warned him to be most careful about Ireland and to leave no doubt in the minds of the listeners "as to their determination to maintain the law and to put down the terrible spirit of lawlessness and violence. . . ." A month afterwards, she wrote, ". . . the more one does for the Irish the more unruly and ungrateful they seem to be."

The plight of Ireland during the autumn of 1880 was too terrible to be helped by reason. Poverty had bred lawlessness which was beyond control. In County Galway there was a policeman for every forty-seven adult males and a soldier for every ninety-seven. The pulse of the organised revolt was the Land League, formed to wrest the agricultural areas from the English-Protestant landlords.

Terror wrung the unhappy people and, under the leadership of Parnell, the tenants boycotted the landowners, refusing to pay rent and intimidating servants and labourers, so that they dared not work for those proprietors who evicted their tenants. Lord Beaconsfield's gloomy prophecy proved to be true. Something "worse even than famine and pestilence" had come to the accursed country.

For almost two years, Ireland was demoralised by intrigue and crime. Men were murdered in their homes, farm-buildings were burned down and cattle were mutilated. These attempts at ruining the landlords at last urged the British Government to legislate. The Bill for the Protection of Persons and Property and the Irish Land Bill were placed before the Commons. The Land Bill was based on three F's—Fixity of tenure, Fair rents, and Free sale. (Beaconsfield suggested for the three F's, three fiddlesticks, believing land tenure to be one of the reasons for Britain's greatness.) These Bills suffered more set-backs and criticism than any in Ireland's history. When the Protection of Persons and Property Bill was before the House, Parnell led the extreme Nationalist Members in a campaign of obstruction so violent that Mr. Gladstone was obliged to move an Urgency Resolution to outwit them. Parnell's followers defied the Speaker, and were finally removed from the House by the Sergeant-

at-Arms. Lord Beaconsfield watched the plight of his old enemy and he made his last gesture of fidelity to his Sovereign by advising his followers to support the Government in the struggle against Parnell's ugly behaviour. When the Protection of Persons and Property Bill was passed, Parliament turned to the more formidable Irish Land Act of 1881. It was born in great pain. The combat of tongues in the House was almost as deplorable as the stories of lawlessness in Ireland. The Duke of Argyll, a devout believer in land tenure, resigned from the office of Lord Privy Seal as protest against the Bill. On the same day, Mr. Gladstone was obliged to report a "scandalous breach of confidence" to the Queen. The provisions of the Land Bill had leaked out and had been published in the *Standard* newspaper. The Cabinet was to be summoned to search into the causes of the treachery. One miserable event piled itself upon the other. In June the troops and constabulary in Ireland were ordered to fire upon the people in case of necessity. The Queen was glad—the Irish would no longer have "a false impression of our power and intentions." Then the Lords made amendments to the Bill which aroused Mr. Gladstone to what the Queen called his "high-handed dictator style." A compromise was reached and the Bill, which was calculated to defeat the machinations of the Land League, became law on August 22nd.

Law did not beget reason or peace. Almost two months after the passing of the Land Act, Parnell was arrested and imprisoned in Kilmainham. The "unscrupulous enemy of the State" appealed to the Irish tenants, on the eve of his incarceration, to pay no rents and to continue their defiance of the law.

No new plan was attempted for the control and pacifying of Ireland before April of 1882, when Lord Spencer, a man of character and experience, was appointed Viceroy. It seemed then that the law might prevail, especially as Parnell compromised and said that if he were released from prison he would help to quell crime and destruction. All hopes were dashed to the ground on the day of the Viceroy's arrival in Dublin. The Chief Secretary and the permanent Under-Secretary were stabbed to death as they were walking home through Phoenix Park. There were more murders in June, and in August a whole family was massacred at Maumtrasna. In this case the criminals were hunted down and hanged.

The Queen turned to her son for advice and support more readily after Lord Beaconsfield was defeated. The Prince's friendships with some of the Radicals did not please her, but they opened the way to a field of influence which would otherwise have been closed. There is a letter which reveals the extent of her increasing faith in her son, written from Balmoral during one of the darkest times in the political upheaval over the Irish Land Bill. The Queen wrote:

"Dearest Bertie,—The state of affairs—this dreadful Radical Government which contains many thinly-veiled *Republicans*—and the way in which they have truckled to the Home Rulers—as well as the utter disregard for all my opinions which after 45 years of experience ought to be considered, all make me very miserable, and disgust me with the hard, ungrateful task I have to go through and weigh on my health and spirits. You as my eldest son, and so intimate as you are with Lord Hartington, *might and should* I think speak strongly to him, *reminding him how HE asked you to tell me in '80 that if I took Mr. Gladstone I should certainly NOT have to take these violent and dangerous Radicals*, instead of which, two days after, I had *most unwillingly* taken this most dangerous man; *all the worst men who had no respect for Kings and Princes or any of the landmarks of the Constitution were put into the Government in spite of me*. The mischief Mr. Gladstone does is *incalculable*; instead of *stemming the current and downward course of Radicalism*, which he could do *perfectly*, he *heads and encourages it* and alienates all the true Whigs and moderate Liberals from him. Patriotism is nowhere in their ranks. How differently do the leaders of the Opposition in the House behave to the disgraceful way in which in times of great difficulty the *Liberal Opposition* opposed Lord Beaconsfield and tried to injure him! You and all of you should *speak to those who might and ought, to act differently to what they do!* Lord Granville behaves miserably; he is the only one *I know well* and he never *even answers* my remarks!! Your devoted Mama, V.R. & I."

1881

On March 15th Lord Beaconsfield spoke in the House of Lords for the last time. Next day he wrote his last letter to Lady Bradford, no more than a *hurried line*, telling her all about the Prince of Wales

who had just come back after two weeks on the Continent. "I am very unwell," he wrote at the end of the letter, "and go about as little as I can. . . ."

People who saw Beaconsfield at this time said that he had lost his old spirit and that he seemed very aged. He sighed for the spring, but March and April came, still cold and bitter and refusing to yield the colour for which he waited. He confessed himself ill to his friends, and when Dilke went to see him on March 27th he was lying on a couch, breathing with difficulty. But his mind was playful still and not above a pleasant, spiteful thrust at the verbose Mr. Gladstone. On March 28th Beaconsfield wrote his last letter to Queen Victoria, ashamed, he said, "to address your Majesty not only from my room, but even my bed. . . . At present I am prostrate, though devoted.—B."

There were spurts of playful cynicism during the melancholy days which preceded the end. Once he was able to read the bulletin, which stated that "Lord Beaconsfield's strength is still maintained." He remarked, "I presume the physicians are conscious of that. It is more than I am."

On the last day of the month Beaconsfield corrected the proofs of his final speech in the House of Lords, for *Hansard*. Still relishing a gesture, he said, "I will not go down to posterity talking bad grammar." These pungent little comments were made in London, not at Hughenden, where he would have wished to die. His room was gay with the hyacinths and daffodils which had been sent to him from the banks at Windsor: and the ever fragrant primroses, the flowers of his gallantry. On April 5th the Queen sent him more primroses from the castle slopes: the slopes upon which eight hundred years of English history had left their mark, the slopes upon which every King had walked since the Conqueror. They were sent from a scene which must have been agreeable to a man who had never ceased to be romantic in all the seventy-seven years of his life.

When it was feared that he was dying the Queen had asked if she might see him. Every day there had been a message, and the flowers in his room were never allowed to seem faded. When she asked again if she might come, it is said that the weak, tired face turned and that Beaconsfield said, "No, it is better not. She will only want

me to take a message to Albert!" The perverse strain of his humour remained strong, even when his body was half dead. From the ironical little jokes, he turned to the last, magnificent avowal of his greatness: he said, "I had rather live, but I am not afraid to die."

On April 19th Benjamin Disraeli died, "without suffering, quite calmly, as if in sleep." The two or three men who were beside his bed, who had known him and loved him, leaned over and kissed his forehead. Four days afterwards Lord Rowton wrote to the Queen. He had "looked on that dear face for the last time," he said. "There lies, and will ever lie, close to that faithful heart the photograph of the Queen *he* loved."

The Queen wrote of her loss to the Empress Augusta. "I and the whole land have lost much through the death of this great, wise and charming statesman, who was my very dear friend! . . . so long as he was there one felt, as with the old Duke of Wellington, a sense of security in having such a wise adviser! But with Lord Beaconsfield our personal friendship and his political wisdom and rare intellect were far, far greater. He was so amazingly devoted to me personally, he understood me so well and I shall never find words enough to express my gratitude for all that he has done for me both *privately and in the interests of the public.*"

At the beginning of the new year the Queen wrote the humble note which has already been quoted. She felt *sadly deficient . . . over sensitive and irritable*. She deplored that when she was *annoyed and hurt*, her temper was *uncontrollable*. She had ended the day's entry in her diary, which she kept so diligently, "I will daily pray for God's help to improve."

On the same day the Queen sent a kindly letter to Mr. Gladstone. The appalling menaces from Ireland made her forget Turkey and Africa and Afghanistan. She wrote: "The Queen thanks Mr. Gladstone for his two most important letters. . . . She thanks him for his good wishes and prays that the heavy clouds, which now surround the political horizon and her Empire, may by God's blessing be dispelled, and that Mr. Gladstone may be guided by Him to do what is right and just."

The members of her Government soon devised a breach which put a strain on the Queen's new year resolutions. When the draft of her speech for the opening of Parliament arrived for her to

sanction, it was "very wrong." The announcement of the withdrawal of defence forces from Kandahar . . . the position for which her soldiers had fought so valiantly in Afghanistan . . . was included in the Speech, without her having heard a word about it before. On the same day the members of her Council attended at Osborne for a meeting. There followed a comedy in which one sees how easily the Queen defeated her Ministers in a difficult situation. She wrote in her Journal:

"Directly after breakfast I telegraphed to Mr. Gladstone to have the Speech altered. . . . All was ready for my Council, and I was waiting, when Sir H. Ponsonby came to say that the Ministers, Lord Spencer and Sir Wm. Harcourt, declared they would wait till Mr. Gladstone's answer came. In vain I assured them (through Sir H. Ponsonby) that I would approve the Speech, leaving out that paragraph; they insisted on waiting . . . 3 o'clock passed, and still no answer came, but it at length did so at half past 3. It was not favourable, saying that the matter had been agreed upon yesterday.

"So I had my Memorandum given to the Ministers, and settled to hold my Council at once. After waiting 10 minutes in the drawing-room, Sir H. Ponsonby came in, saying the Ministers objected to the word 'disapproval,' which rather amused me. Called in Leopold, and after some difficulty, suggested altering 'disapproval' to 'much regrets.' This seemed to settle the matter, but 20 minutes elapsed before Sir H. Ponsonby again returned, saying they objected to the last part, in which I asked for an assurance. So I said, Very well, I would not send the Memorandum through them, but straight to Mr. Gladstone, and would hold the Council. Dreadfully put out, they at length came in, after 4, including Lord Sydney. The business was hurriedly gone through, and the Speech approved. I spoke to no one, and the Ministers nearly tumbled over each other going out. . . ."

The incident permits a glimpse of Queen Victoria's courage, the fullness of which was revealed during the spring of 1882. The Queen was then sixty-three years old. She wrote with strange calm in her Journal:

"2nd March, 1882.—At 4.30 left Buckingham Palace for Windsor. Just as we were driving off from the station there, the people, or rather the Eton boys, cheered, and at the same time there was the sound of what I thought was an explosion from the engine, but in another moment I saw people rushing about and a man being violently hustled, people rushing down the street. I then realised that it was a shot, which must have been meant for me, though I was not sure, and Beatrice said nothing. . . .

"Took tea with Beatrice, and telegraphed to all my children and near relations. Brown came in to say that the revolver had been found loaded, and one chamber discharged. Superintendent Hayes, of the Police here, seized the man, who was wretchedly dressed, and had a very bad countenance. . . . He is well spoken and evidently an educated man. . . . An Eton boy had rushed up, and beaten him with an umbrella. Great excitement prevails. Nothing can exceed dearest Beatrice's courage and calmness, for she saw the whole thing, the man take aim, and fire straight into the carriage, but she never said a word, observing that I was not frightened. . . . Was really not shaken or frightened. . . .

"3rd Mar.—I slept as well as usual, and never once thought of what had occurred. . . . Brown brought the revolver for me to see. It could be fired off in rapid succession with the greatest facility, quite small but with six chambers. I saw the bullets. Was much relieved to hear that the missing one was found. . . . Walked with Beatrice down to Mausoleum, and here I knelt by my beloved one's tomb and offered up prayers of thanksgiving for my preservation to God our Heavenly Father. . . ."

The Queen wrote to the Empress Augusta: "I was not frightened or affected in the very slightest degree. My dear Beatrice also appeared very quiet and courageous and does not feel at all shaken by the event. . . . everywhere abroad people have shown the keenest and most flattering sympathy. I had no idea that I was so popular in other countries. . . . I have sent Vicky a drawing of the criminal which she can show to you. He is a thoroughly bad and eccentric type, but *not* insane. . . ."

## *Chapter Forty*

1881-1882

In 1879, when Great Britain and France had elected Ministers to work hand in hand as advisers to the Khedive of Egypt, the Prince of Wales looked upon the Dual Control as an expression of Anglo-French friendship; as a guarantee of his *Entente Cordiale*. The merchants of Cairo and Alexandria had prospered under this policy, but there were many Egyptians to whom the signs of British and French power were unwelcome. Arabi Bey, a passionate Nationalist and a *fellah* with a deep-rooted feeling for the soil, spread his disturbing doctrines among the Egyptian soldiers. In January of 1881, they revolted against the Khedive, under the spell of Arabi's leadership. This was more than a struggle between the Egyptian and the Khedive: it was against Turkey, England and France—a crusade to establish the Egyptians as masters of their own earth. Unfortunately for their laudable ideal, great tracts of Egypt were already pledged to the bondholders of Europe.

The Queen continued to treat Sir Charles Dilke as a disloyal interloper, but the Prince gave the Foreign Under-Secretary his friendship and he received trust and encouragement in return. Dilke even agreed to his interviewing the French Prime Minister, early in 1881, when a commercial treaty between the two countries was being considered. The suggestion had come from the Prince, and Dilke had treated him as a professional diplomat, sending him off to Paris with a paper of "instructions." Here was usefulness at last. Dilke acknowledged the success of his intervention and Gambetta said that the Prince had made "some impression." He told a friend that it was "no waste of time" to talk with the Prince, "even over a merry supper at the *Café Anglais*." Here were the interests and opportunities which delighted him. The Prince went so far in his friendliness as to approve of the proposal to construct a Channel tunnel between the two countries.

The Prince of Wales had been so severely snubbed when he showed an interest in Ireland in the 'sixties that he seemed to develop an inhibition in regard to the Irish. He spoke and wrote little during the painful shaping of the Land Bill and the reign of terror in Ireland. But the jealousies and struggles for power

in the Mediterranean interested him vastly, especially when they formed a depressing cloud over the *Entente*. In April, the French, who were already established in Algeria, invaded Tunis and humiliated and frightened the Bey into accepting terms which made the country little more than a protectorate of France. The apparent failure of the Dual Control in Egypt, and the annexation of Tunis, made the Queen pause in her doleful letter-writing about Ireland to warn the Ministers. A friend had told her that the French talked of Egypt as "an *ultimate* object." She hoped that England's apparent acquiescence over the annexation of Tunis would not lead France and Europe to believe that Britain would equally tolerate her taking Egypt. She wrote to Lord Granville, "Egypt can be in *no other hands but ours if it is to be taken from Turkey or rather from the Khedive."*

The crisis in Egypt came at a fortunate time for the Prince of Wales. His friend Gambetta had been elected Premier of France and on the eve of his accession, Gambetta, the Prince and Dilke had eaten *dejeuner* together at the Moulin Rouge restaurant in Paris. Sir Sidney Lee<sup>1</sup> states that "Political confidences were freely exchanged" in their conversation. Gambetta reigned for only sixty days, but in that time he was able to substantiate the Prince's faith in him. Arabi Bey followed up the revolt of the army by trying to set up a nationalist dictatorship in Egypt. Gambetta showed no signs of the French treachery which the Queen suspected, nor of any attempt to advance the interests of France against England. He prepared a note in the name of both France and Britain, promising to protect the Khedive's Government against all forms of attack. Both countries followed up the moral effect of the note by sending a naval squadron to Alexandria.

The warships went side by side, in the spirit of the *Entente*, but there the fraternity ended. Arabi's cry, *Egypt for the Egyptians*, was droned in the bazaars of the city. He had forced his way to dictatorship, and the Khedive was playing the innocuous part of William the First to Arabi's Bismarck.

From May until July the warships waited off the low-lying coast of Alexandria. Arabi was made of arrogant stuff, and the sight of the squadrons in the bay and the threats of French and English

<sup>1</sup> King Edward VII, Sir Sidney Lee, Vol. I, p. 452.

attack did not frighten him. On June 11th, pillage and massacre devastated Alexandria, and a number of French and English people were murdered. Still the warships waited, while Arabi was building new defences on the harbour front. In July, the French warships withdrew at a call from their Government. France was too conscious of Bismarck's menacing shadow to engage in promiscuous fracas abroad. The British warships were left alone to bombard Alexandria. When the harbour fortifications had been destroyed, the bluejackets plunged into the fetid bazaars of the town and slowly impressed upon Arabi's adherents that the cry was to be *Egypt for the English*. On land, Sir Garnet Wolseley, with Prince Arthur among his officers, defeated Arabi's army at Tel-el-Kebir.

In September the Queen was waiting at Balmoral, where she had watched Prince Albert lighting the bonfire for Sebastopol, also in September, almost thirty years before. News of the victory at Tel-el-Kebir came to her: news of the courage of her Irish soldiers, of her son's unflinching bravery under fire and of the capture of Cairo. Arabi was a prisoner in the hands of the British and the power of the Khedive was restored.

Prince Arthur came home, and among his trophies was a fine Turkish carpet from Arabi's tent. It was spread in the quadrangle of Windsor Castle and the Queen stood upon it while she pinned the medals on the breasts of her soldiers.

A telegram and a letter tell all that can be known of the Queen's emotions in this heroic time. Arabi had been handed over to the Khedive for punishment and he had been dismissed with the lenient sentence of exile in Ceylon. Lord Dufferin thought it a moment for a gesture in diplomacy. He wrote to Lord Granville:

"It would be a good thing if the Government, and still better Her Majesty, would send a personal message to the Khedive congratulating him on the magnanimity and good sense he had shown in the Arabi affair.

"It would give him courage to face his womankind, who are frantic."

Queen Victoria's answer was sharp: "The Queen *cannot possibly* send the message of approbation to the Khedive for his 'magnanimity' to Arabi, as she *so highly disapproves* of the weakness which

actuated it. It is for the British Government, who are solely responsible for this act—which was *forced* upon the Khedive, and the Queen must ever think very unwisely—to send him this message.” She added, “The ‘womankind’ show a right feeling in being ‘frantic.’ ”

The comradeship between France and England, so eagerly planned in the Prince’s talks with Gambetta over the dinner-table in Paris, did not withstand the shock of the Egyptian affair in 1882. There was confusion in the motives of both countries. The Queen had been “terrible in constant resolution,” when she learned that the French had occupied Tunis and that their ultimate goal was Egypt. She was equally indignant when their warships fled from the bay of Alexandria, leaving the British to subdue the Egyptians alone.

The Prince of Wales had now come to enjoy the dual rôle of play-boy and diplomat in Paris, but in 1883 he found that the French no longer smiled so gallantly at the mention of his name. He was the ambassador of the British, who now held Egypt in the hollow of their hand. Here was one reason for anger and jealousy. Also, he was a *princely* ambassador, and the royal appellation had once more become distasteful in Paris. This whim was the result of a sudden, anti-royalist agitation, when the Chamber of Deputies passed a Bill for the expulsion of the Bourbons and Bonapartes. The Prince’s beloved Paris rejected him for the first time, and he cancelled his spring visit to France on the advice of the Ambassador. The change in the feeling of the French caused the Prince to examine his own enthusiasms more calmly. He doubted France, and he came to think more kindly of Germany for the first time since the invasion of Schleswig-Holstein in 1863.

In September of 1883, the German Crown Prince was in London, and the Prince of Wales revealed the faint change in his affections by telling his brother-in-law that “a strong desire was growing in the English political world, irrespective of Party, ‘to establish a more intimate relationship with Germany.’ ” The Prince substantiated this view by a number of gracious actions. He twice went to Germany, he attended the celebrations of his sister’s silver wedding and he gave his nephew a costume of Royal Stewart tartan, with

"all the accoutrements of the Highland dress." Prince William was pleased to be able to dance at the silver wedding in a kilt and he insisted on being photographed. He distributed the photographs to his friends, and beneath each one, he wrote in English, "I bide my time."

Prince William's ambitions were already shaped. When he was twenty-five years old he admitted that he wished to inveigle the Czar into a plot to crush Great Britain. In 1884, he went to stay with the Czar and "he won the ear of his imperial host by enthusiastically pledging himself to do all he could to aid Russia in her quarrels with England."<sup>1</sup>

When he returned to Berlin, Prince William began a correspondence with the Czar: letters full of gossip, intended to inflame Russia. In 1884, after the Prince of Wales had been in Berlin, Prince William wrote:

"The visit of the Prince of Wales has yielded and is still bringing extraordinary fruit, which will continue to multiply under the hands of my mother and the Queen of England. But these English have accidentally forgotten that *I* exist! And I swear to You, my dear cousin, that anything I can do for You and Your country I will do, and I swear that I will keep my word! But only it will take a long time and will have to be done very slowly."

In March of the following year, when the Prince was expected in Berlin, Prince William wrote once more to the Czar:

"We shall see the Prince of Wales here in a few days. I am not at all delighted by this unexpected apparition, because—excuse me, he is Your brother-in-law—owing to his false and intriguing nature he will undoubtedly attempt in one way or another to push the Bulgarian business [against Russian interests]—may Allah send them to Hell, as the Turk would say!—or to do a little political plotting behind the scenes with the ladies."

One sentence in Prince William's letter, referring to the British expedition against the Sudanese, reveals all that can be known of

<sup>1</sup> *King Edward VII*, Sir Sidney Lee, Vol. I, p. 485.

his feeling for England at this time. He wrote: "May the Mahdi chuck them all into the Nile."

In the spring of 1883, the Queen left London once more and sought the quiet of Osborne. The Court settled to the most simple habits and entertainments when they were thus away from the hurly-burly of the Metropolis. For an hour or more each morning the Queen would sit at her desk: there were dispatch-boxes from Whitehall, or a Minister who had hurried down from London the night before. Her desk was covered with family photographs. The inkstand was a silver boat, with two winged boys and two mortal boys in silver, pushing the craft along a rough silver beach. The pen wiper was a gold cock's head with a red cloth comb upon his crown. By this time, every possession of the Queen told its little story.

She was more than sixty years old now and two generations of friends had already died about her. Her memory stretched back to the days of the gibbet. Sometimes, at Windsor, she would rise from her chair and walk about the room. Her servants often found her thus, fingering the souvenirs of sixty years, among them a silver teapot which she had used when she was a child at Kensington Palace. Upon the tables there were water-colour sketches of Rosenau, where she had walked beside the stream with Albert.

The most personal and loved of the objects were carried everywhere with her—from Windsor to Osborne, where the rooms in which he had worked were awakened from their slumbers beneath dust sheets. There was more leisure here. Old letters were read, old friends recalled. But the business of government was not forgotten. When she came to the throne, Carlyle had written, "Poor little Queen, she is at an age when a girl can hardly be trusted to choose a bonnet for herself: yet a task has been laid upon her from which an archangel might shrink." One day the Queen read this to one of her Ladies and she smiled. "Don't you think that is very amusing?" she said. Now she ruled half the world. When she opened an atlas, the red ink of her possessions seemed to make the pages burn, as evidence of her glory. She was Queen of the Empire upon which the sun never set. Livingstone had named the mightiest waterfall in Africa after her. The biggest lake in Africa was Victoria Nyanza

and a State in Australia bore her name. The main streets in remote colonial towns were Victoria Streets; the Maoris had made a statue of her in one of their villages; Canadian woodmen sculptured her out of snow in a clearing they had made in the backwoods, and they planted a fluttering Union Jack in her snow hand. Far away Universities were built in her name and she was prayed for in a hundred tongues.

When she drove through the streets of London, the old resentment was forgotten. The people were silent as she drove past, because they knew that she wished them to be. Her wish was so respected that when a visitor from America cried "Hurrah! Hurrah!" as the Queen drove by, she was buffeted and jeered at for daring to offend the quiet of her progress.

Sometimes at Osborne, her neighbours came to see her, with as little fuss as if she were the squire's wife. One afternoon "the great Poet Tennyson" came and stayed for almost an hour. It was "most interesting." He had grown very old, and his eyesight was failing. He was "very shaky on his legs," but "very kind." Tennyson too had been a rebel in his day; a bombastic Titan when aroused. But the restraint of age had come to both of them and they talked gently of the past. Tennyson had been born in 1809—in the reign of George the Third. "He spoke of the many friends he had lost, and what it would be if he did not feel and know that there was another world where there would be no parting." He talked of his horror of unbelievers and philosophers.

When the Queen took leave of the old poet, she thanked him for his kindness. "I . . . said how much I appreciated it, for I had gone through much. . . ." Tennyson answered, "You are so alone on that terrible height. I have only a year or two more to live, but I am happy to do anything for you I can."

He was not quite right in saying she was "so alone." Only a few weeks before the Prince had celebrated his forty-second birthday. The Queen had written in her Journal, of his being "warm-hearted" and "kind." She added, "he is always a very good son to me."

The scenes at Osborne, in the quiet hour after dinner, might have belonged to any home. Queen Victoria would sit far away from the beechwood fire, listening perhaps to a duet being played by

Princess Beatrice and one of the Ladies. Sometimes the Queen would sing herself, when there were none but her own daughters in the room.

Once, when she was almost sixty-five, she paused by the music stand and picked up a copy of *H.M.S. Pinafore* which had been so fashionable in 1874. She placed it on the piano, and then she sang:

*I'm called Little Buttercup—dear Little Buttercup,  
Though I could never tell why,  
But still I'm called Buttercup, poor Little Buttercup,  
Sweet Little Buttercup I!*

*. . . Then buy of your Buttercup—dear Little Buttercup,  
Sailors should never be shy,  
So buy of your Buttercup—poor Little Buttercup,  
Come, of your Buttercup buy!*

The Queen finished her song without one faltering note. She turned to somebody in the room and said, "Yes, it is all over now. But, I used to be able to sing quite well. Once Mr. Mendelssohn listened to me, when I sang with the Prince. He said that we used to sing very nicely together. But, it is all over now."

Early in 1883, Mr. Gladstone showed the first signs of breaking down under the weight of the problems of Ireland, Egypt, Africa, India and France: almost the load of Atlas on his shoulders. His personal relations with the Queen were not likely to lessen his burden. In December there had been an interview with her on "most difficult ground." He wrote in his diary, ". . . aided by her beautiful manners, we got over it better than would be expected."

The store of strength from the years of tree-felling at Hawarden had petered out. Mr. Gladstone was inclined to take to his bed "on less provocation than most people," but in 1883 he was so ill that he had to abandon his proposed journey to Midlothian. The Queen was sympathetic, but she did not fail to make capital out of his breakdown. She recalled the first Midlothian speeches with a shudder, and she wrote to her Minister on January 5th, expressing her "earnest hope" that he would be "very guarded in his language" when he was in Scotland. Immense importance would be attached to *every* word falling from him. She had heard that he was not strong: was it not "rather venturesome" for him to go, in cold January, to cold Scotland, with the opening of Parliament so near?

A doleful letter came back from Mr. Gladstone. His doctor had forbidden the journey, so the danger was removed. The Queen insisted that he should be *really quiet* and not occupy himself at all with affairs, and not write long letters. "Would he not now, for his health, accept a Peerage?"

Mr. Gladstone did not accept the honour: he marshalled his shattered strength and, after five weeks' holiday at Cannes, he returned to England and faced the fourth year of his Parliament. Ireland, South Africa and Egypt were still the heaviest burdens. A number of executions in Dublin did not deter the Irish in their tactics, and they blew up part of the Local Government Board Office in Whitehall, and a gasworks in Glasgow. In the same month they tried to blow up an aqueduct, and in March they dared to plant explosives in the office of *The Times*. In the 'sixties, the Queen's heart might have been softened by this last escapade.

In South Africa, Britons, Boers and Zulus paused for breath after the Basuto risings and the bloody fiasco of Majuba Hill. Cetewayo, who had been brought to England and foolishly dressed in a frock coat and top hat for presentation to the Queen at Osborne, was back in Africa and hatching new plots, but not against the British. He had heard the drone of London's traffic and he had seen the grey warships on the Solent. He had seen the amazing woman who had sat so still when he bowed before her. She had told him that he was a brave man. Cetewayo had learned his lesson.

1883-1884

A new horror broke upon the Government from the Southern Provinces of Egypt where the Sudanese rallied about a mystic who incited them to refuse British rule. The Mahdi, or prophet, claimed divine inspiration, and, like Mahommed, he believed that God's business should be done with a sword. His soldiers spread to the shores of the Red Sea and they threatened the entrance to the Suez Canal. While Britain was trying to soothe the Egyptians in the north, she was obliged to send troops into the Sudan. The *gendarmerie* who formed the first expedition were defeated. A brigade of the British Army then went south from Cairo and routed the Sudanese at El Teb, in February of 1884. But Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet had learned very little from the massacre of the British mission by the Afghans, or from Majuba Hill. Sir Gerald Graham, who commanded the British troops, was ordered to withdraw and return to Cairo. The order was part of the bloodless, unimaginative policy which finally led to the murder of General Gordon.

While members of the Cabinet sat back with their thinking caps drawn over their eyes, loyal Egyptian garrisons were isolated in Sudanese territory in peril of their lives. Again the Queen and the Prince of Wales were of one mind. "We must make a demonstration of strength," wrote the Queen.

General Gordon was sent out to the Sudan—as mediator, to arrange for the withdrawal of the garrisons to Egypt. In spite of his knowledge of the Sudan and his personal powers, Gordon failed, and in April of 1884 news reached England that he was besieged at Khartoum. May, June and July passed. Mr. Gladstone, who had cried out so sententiously about "the sanctity of life in the hill

villages of Afghanistan," when he had an election to win in 1879, and of *Almighty God* who had united the electors of Midlothian with those same Afghan barbarians, "by the law of mutual love," allowed Gordon to wait for three months before a relief expedition set out, under Lord Wolseley, to approach Khartoum by the Nile route.

When the Duke of Connaught joined Wolseley's expedition to Egypt in 1882, the Prince of Wales had pleaded to be allowed to serve with him. He repeated his request when Lord Wolseley was preparing for his expedition in 1884. Neither the Queen nor the Ministers would allow him to face the hazards of active service. But the Prince's opinions had not been ignored in the planning of the expedition. On his advice, Lord Charles Beresford had gone with Wolseley as A.D.C. to the Commander-in-Chief. The Prince was interested in every detail of the expedition, the work of the Camel Corps, and the personal service of each officer. The once regretted interest for people instead of things became a great merit in time of war.

On January 22nd the Prince wrote to Wolseley, "Most sincerely do I trust that you will get safely to Khartoum . . . and find Gordon safe and sound. But what will you do with him when he is released? And what will you do after occupying Khartoum? That is the question. I sincerely hope that we are not going to hurry away and leave the Sudan in the state you have found it. Not being a member of H.M.'s Govt., I can give no opinion on the subject. . . ."

The Prince's hopes fell when news of the failure of Lord Wolseley's expedition arrived on January 28th. When he reached the country about Khartoum, Wolseley found that it had been attacked by the Mahdi's followers two days before. After eleven months of waiting—waiting for the rescuers who had, in turn, waited for the order of the Government—Gordon had been murdered.

1884

During the two Parliamentary sessions of 1884, even the civilities disappeared from the letters exchanged between Queen Victoria and Mr. Gladstone. The delay over the rescue of the garrisons in the Sudan and then the unwillingness to save Gordon

in Khartoum had killed the Queen's last hopes in her Government. Personal animosity was not the only basis of her fear now. She believed that the "weakness and vacillation" of Mr. Gladstone's Government had lowered Britain's prestige among the nations. The German newspapers forgot the dignified figure of Beaconsfield at the Berlin Congress, and to the distress of the Crown Princess they published "rude and impertinent" articles which echoed Bismarck's contempt for Gladstone. The Prime Minister was not alone in the Queen's gallery of Liberal scapegoats. Now she had "no confidence in Lord Granville," who had seemed a steadfast friend in 1880. In 1884, she thought him "weak as water," and she feared that Lord Derby's influence was harmful.

The personal sorrow of Prince Leopold's death deepened the Queen's unhappiness in March, but she fought against the bereavement with courage. The demoralisation of the Cabinet called for persistent censure, in letters from herself and in votes from the Opposition. The weakened reputation of Great Britain was emphasised when Mr. Gladstone outlined the terms for the British occupation of Egypt. He was willing to yield to the wish of the Powers that the British should withdraw from Egypt after five years. The Queen thought the attempt to intimidate the British Government to be an impertinence. ". . . Why are we to be bullied and frightened by other Powers?" she wrote. "The Queen feels *much aggrieved* and *annoyed*. She was never listened to, or her advice followed, and *all* she foretold *invariably* happened, and what she urged was *done* when *too late!* It is dreadful for her to see how we are going downhill, and to be unable to prevent the humiliation of this country."

Nearer home was the dissension over the Franchise Bill. In his own memorandum, Mr. Gladstone said that the Bill would add to the present aggregate constituency of the United Kingdom, taken at 3,000,000, . . . 2,000,000, nearly twice as much as was added since 1867, and more than four times as much as was added in 1832. Mr. Gladstone's plans for modified franchise were an added cause for hostility, this time between the Lords and the Commons. The Peers were attacked and belittled by Mr. Chamberlain and his Radical friends for rejecting the Bill during the first session. Here the foundations of the Constitution were undermined. The Queen

said that she yielded "to no one" in true Liberal feeling, but she would never tolerate the wild attacks and the daring attempts at flouting the authority of the Lords. According to Mr. Gladstone's observations, she wrote, "there ought to be a Radical House of Lords." "The Monarchy would be utterly untenable were there *no* balance of power left, no *restraining* power."

"Mr. Gladstone has great power over his Cabinet," the Queen wrote to the Prime Minister, "and he should exert it for the benefit of peace. . . ." His reply was almost rude. He had neither *time* nor *eyesight* "to make himself acquainted by careful perusal with all the speeches of his colleagues." The Queen's letters changed from peevishness to anger, and from anger to candid accusation of his failure. Gladstone defended himself once more. He had "*no general jurisdiction over the speeches*" of his colleagues "*and no right to prescribe their tone and colour.*" The Queen did not agree. She said that the "Prime Minister *has and ought to have* that power."

The sense of failure which was hanging over the Government slowly permeated the country. The chariot of political favour began to turn, and Gladstone felt the reins of influence and power slipping as definitely as he had felt them falling into his hands when he was thundering through Midlothian in 1879. The Prince of Wales did not withdraw his friendly devotion to Gladstone, but he deplored the decadence of the Ministry, and his letters to Lord Wolseley and his friends show how he resented the agitation over the Franchise Bill, the agonies of Ireland and the attacks upon the Lords.

When Parliament met again at the close of the year, the rickety career of the Franchise Bill ended in compromise. The Opposition leaders conferred with Mr. Gladstone and they agreed to support the Bill, providing a Redistribution Bill was also passed. The pages of Queen Victoria's correspondence during the months of these worrying negotiations between Liberals, Conservatives and Peers, reveal the full measure of her political influence. In a crisis, she still ruled the country. There was no doubt of her success in bringing the opposed statesmen together and all of them paid tributes to her sagacity. Mr. Gladstone thanked the Queen for her "wise, gracious, and steady exercise of influence." Lord Salisbury expressed his "humble and earnest gratitude for her powerful

intervention." "Your Majesty must feel proud," wrote Lord Granville. "I certainly am," the Queen wrote in her Journal.

Mr. Gladstone's friends thought that the Grand Old Man would perhaps retire with the bedraggled laurels of his Franchise Bill, which was passed on December 6th. They asked the Prince to intercede with the Queen on Mr. Gladstone's behalf and induce her to give him the most coveted honour in her keeping—the Garter. The Prince trod carefully. It would be useless for him to approach his mother at Windsor or at Osborne. Better, he said, to wait until they were in the solacing atmosphere of Balmoral, where, the Prince said, his mother was "always in a better way."

The Queen went to Scotland in September. In November when the "dear place" was "bright with snow on the highest hills," the Prince spoke to his mother of Gladstone, but without success. "He found her unresponsive and confessed that he had chosen an inopportune time." The Franchise legislation had not been completed then, and the Prince suggested to Lord Granville that it would be better to wait until the Bill was passed. Even then, the Queen refused to invest Gladstone with the Order, which had been founded in honour of prayer and chivalry. The Queen did not approve of the tenor of Mr. Gladstone's prayers nor did she count him chivalrous. She offered Mr. Gladstone an Earldom when he retired in 1885, but he refused the honour, at the same time expressing his "profound and lasting gratitude" for her "generous, most generous letter."

## *Chapter Forty-two*

1884-1885

As compensation for the troubles of a Liberal Government, the Queen seemed to gather increased affection about her, from her family and from her people. She wrote of her private happiness when she went to Osborne for Christmas, in 1874. She had come to represent security to the mass of people. Trade had suffered to show them that they must not worship industry. Governments had fallen to prove that statesmen were frail and dependent upon the favours of the electors at polling time. The powers of Europe had been alternately friends and foes, and there were the stories of Afghanistan, Majuba Hill, and Khartoum to shake confidence in British colonisation and military supremacy. In all this medley of events, the Sovereign represented the continuity of British life.

One of the Queen's sons was married to a daughter of the Czar of Russia and her heir was married to a Princess of Denmark whose brother was King of Greece. The Queen's cousin was King of the Belgians, and her daughter was German Crown Princess. Her third son had fought with the army in Egypt, and her daughter, Princess Louise, had been châtelaine at Government House in Canada. Her youngest daughter, whose charm and fidelity had been tested through twenty-five years of the Queen's widowhood, was engaged to Prince Henry of Battenberg. There were many causes for happiness, in spite of the ogre in Downing Street. The Queen watched her eldest son with increasing satisfaction. During his rare visits, she would often forget her rigid discipline. Sometimes a door would be opened and mother and son would be discovered sitting upon a sofa, rocking with laughter. He had penetrated into a hundred spheres of usefulness, not by the road of scholarship as the Prince Consort would have wished, but by ways which were related to experience of people and life. They were the ways the Queen might have chosen if the discipline of her married life had not turned her against the pleasures for which her heart had craved when she was in her teens. Once when she was quite old, one of her ladies induced her to listen while she read a novel aloud. The Queen *never* read novels, and her daily relaxation was always in the

more solid realms of biography and history. But there was a new novel by Marion Crawford with scenes set in the gardens of somebody she knew quite well, in Sicily. The lady suggested that this would excuse them for putting aside Dean Stanley's Life, in four volumes, for a day or two. When the Queen was driving in the afternoon, she said to her Lady, "I am excited to arrive home, so that we can get on with it. I wonder what happens next?"

When the novel was finished, the Lady suggested that they might read another. The Queen tightened her self-imposed control. "No, not two novels running!" So they continued reading Dean Stanley's Life, in four volumes.

News of the progress of the Sudanese expedition was sent to the Queen all through January of 1885. Late in the month she telegraphed a message to Lord Wolseley, after the battle of Abu Klea. Lord Hartington bristled in the War Office, and he wrote a letter to Sir Henry Ponsonby, asking if it was the Queen's "desire to adopt the same course on other, similar occasions which might occur." He added, "I cannot help thinking that it would on the whole be most convenient that any message from the Queen should be sent through the Secretary of State."

The peace of Osborne was shattered. The Queen thought Lord Hartington's letter "*very officious and impertinent in tone.*" She added, in her letter to her secretary, "The Queen has the right to telegraph congratulations and enquiries to *any one*, and won't stand dictation. She won't be a machine. But the Liberals always wish to make her *feel THAT*, and she *won't accept it.*"

The electors slowly came to share the Queen's anxiety over Mr. Gladstone's pacifism. It seemed to be futile for him to roar in Midlothian without biting in Ireland, South Africa or Egypt. The disasters of Majuba Hill and Khartoum, the weakening of Britain's hold in Afghanistan, and the murder and incendiaryism in Ireland accumulated in the public mind and, when the Queen left Osborne for Windsor in February, there was already ominous talk of the fall of the Government. The defeat was hastened when the Irish members joined the Conservatives in voting against the Government's plan to increase the tax on beer. On June 9th, the Queen received a telegram from Mr. Gladstone. He said that, in the face of the defeat in the House, he wished to resign.

1885

When Prince Bismarck spoke in the Reichstag early in March he lost patience with Gladstone's wavering foreign policy and stated that the "loquacious futility of Downing Street rendered negotiation with it intolerable." When his own professional politicians exasperated him, Bismarck sighed for the class of English gentleman who served his country for his country's sake. To Bismarck, the perfect example of the English type was Lord Salisbury, whom he had met and respected during the Berlin Congress of 1879.

Bismarck was delighted and full of congratulations in June of 1885, when he heard that the Queen had summoned Lord Salisbury to Balmoral two days after she had received a letter from Mr. Gladstone, telling her that her "servants, assembled in Cabinet," felt that they "had no alternative but humbly and dutifully to tender . . . their resignation."

On June 23rd, the Queen was awakened at eight o'clock in the morning, at Windsor, to sign the letter which was to bring Lord Salisbury to the Castle to kiss hands. She wrote in her Journal, "What a relief."

The experiment of Conservative Government under Lord Salisbury was to last only seven months. The Liberals were to sweep back again under Mr. Gladstone, at the end of the year. But the interlude of rest from the party which she disliked threw light upon the Queen's changing character, especially in relation to her son. The Prince was personally interested in the Government because his friend Lord Randolph Churchill was to be Secretary for India and he went down to Windsor for the Council on June 24th. What would have been viewed by his mother as an intrusion ten years before was now welcomed as a friendly and affectionate act. The Queen wrote, "Bertie kindly came to be with me during the Council, and lunched with us. . . . Bertie left again, having kindly spent the whole afternoon at Windsor, which was the greatest help to me."

On July 4th, Lord Randolph Churchill dined at Windsor. The Queen had regretted her son's friendship with Lord Randolph as much as she had regretted his intimacy with Sir Charles Dilke. In 1885 the Queen was more willing to throw her prejudices aside and to accept Lord Randolph on his own merits. She had warmed to the

frivolous Lord Charles Beresford, and now she willingly saw merits in Churchill. "He is very quiet and has an extraordinary likeness to darling Leopold which quite startled me." Then she wrote, "Lord Randolph talked sensibly."

When Lord Salisbury had dined on an evening early in 1875, the Queen thought him "particularly agreeable and gentle." She would not believe, meeting him thus, that he could be so "severe and sarcastic in debate." The many occasions on which they met during the Beaconsfield Ministry had always pleased and reassured her. The Prince of Wales had not always been as confident as his mother. He had been too willing to blame Lord Salisbury for the failure of the Conference in Constantinople. But when Salisbury came into power, the Prince yielded to better judgment. He recognised the Minister's staunch character, his genius in foreign affairs, and his immaculate ethics. They became good friends and the Prince was as much entranced by the humorous aspects of Salisbury's personality as he was reassured by his talents. Salisbury's vagueness about people was a source of perpetual fun to his friends. He could remember nobody's face. Once when he was talking to the Prince of Wales, the Prince showed him some photographs of himself. Lord Salisbury looked at one of the photographs with apparent interest and then said, "Poor Buller."

The brief seven months of power in 1885 gave Lord Salisbury limited scope for display of force or attempt at reconciliation abroad, although the policy he laid down in Egypt determined "the course of European history for more than a generation."<sup>1</sup> Just as his calming and powerful influence was establishing England's name again in the respect of Europe, the harassing campaign for the November elections came upon the Government. Mr. Gladstone's followers had not pursued peace and reconciliation during their respite from power. They had divided: Lord Hartington had gathered the Whigs about him, and Mr. Chamberlain was leading the Radicals. The General Election was spread over November and December, and as the results dribbled into the Queen's hands, she watched the rise and fall of the Conservative figures anxiously. On December 3rd, she was "much distressed" by the returns. She sensed the revival of her Liberal enemy, and she wrote to Lord

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, Lady Gwendolin Cecil.

Salisbury of the "*absolute necessity* of having strong and able and safe men to conduct the government of the Empire, such as is the case in Lord Salisbury's hands. She therefore looks to him to help and advise her in this critical juncture."

"Things must and cannot return to what they were, for it would be UTTER ruin to the country and Europe. . . . We want a strong coalition and to this end every nerve must be strained. . . . The Queen appeals to Lord Salisbury's devotion to her person and Throne and asks him not to desert her, which she is sure he and many others will not."

1886

The tenure of many a Government and the fame of many a politician have depended, not on how well the thirty million people of Great Britain have been governed, but on how skilfully some five million people in Ireland have been policed. Again in 1886, Ireland was the fulcrum upon which the scales of political power were balanced. In their political speeches Lord Salisbury and his followers were more or less silent upon the Irish question, but Mr. Gladstone spoke ominously, with the full knowledge that, when the elections were over, the leader who wooed the affections of Parnell and his followers would win the day.

Two hundred and fifty Conservative members, three hundred and thirty-four Liberal members, and Mr. Parnell's eighty-six Nationalists gathered in the Commons for the opening of the new session. The Queen manifested her Conservative affections by opening Parliament—for the last time in her life. She was horrified at the impending decision and she clung to the hope of Salisbury's success to the last moment. Five days after the opening of Parliament, Lord Salisbury's Government was out-voted, and the Queen was obliged to send for Mr. Gladstone, and to accept his troth once more as her Minister. There was one ray of hope in the dismal return to the old regime. Lord Granville was removed from her intimate political circle by being appointed Colonial Secretary. In his place came Lord Rosebery "on the preliminary understanding . . . that the policy of his immediate predecessor should not be changed." The imposition of this condition was a tribute to the Queen's sagacity, but, more than this, a revelation of her power and

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influence in the political fluctuations of her long reign. Her despair lay in the loss of Lord Salisbury. In seven months he had given her a glimpse of the security she used to feel with Lord Beaconsfield. There were no sly impertinences in Salisbury's letters; no tricks with dispatches explained away afterwards, when it was too late. With Lord Salisbury she had felt the "blessing of having a Prime Minister in whom she could *thoroughly* confide, and whose opinion was always given in so kind and wise a manner." It had been "a pleasure and a comfort" for her to receive him and to read his letters.

She wrote to him on the day when he gave up the seals:

*The Queen does not trust herself to dwell on parting with Lord Salisbury. It would quite upset her—for the loss to her is so great, and she is so alone.*

### *Chapter Forty-three*

1886

Mr. Gladstone was encouraged when he went to Osborne, at the beginning of his third term as Prime Minister. He had written in his diary of his hope that his Ministry would last for "a brief time only." The Queen shared his wish, but she seemed to swallow her resentment during the first audience. Mr. Gladstone wrote, "I am bound to say that at Osborne in the course of a long conversation, the Queen was frank and free, and showed none of the 'armed neutrality,' which as far as I know has been the best definition of her attitude in the more recent years towards a liberal minister." The Queen's "armed neutrality" did not withstand the conflict for very long.

When Mr. Gladstone announced his plan to grant the Irish their own government some of his followers fell away from him: Lord Derby, Lord Northbrook, Mr. Goschen and Mr. Bright were among the first. Gladstone had been warned of the possible disintegration of his party, but he had said that he was prepared to "go forward without either Hartington or Chamberlain."

Mr. Gladstone introduced his Bill to an excited House on April 8th. When he recalled the dynamic speech, which lasted about three and a half hours, he wrote, "Voice and strength and freedom were granted to me in a degree beyond what I could have hoped. But many a prayer had gone up for me, and not I believe in vain." The Members listened in silence, under the dangerous spell of Mr. Gladstone's oratory:

*Ireland stands at your bar expectant, hopeful, almost suppliant. Her words are the words of truth and soberness. She asks a blessed oblivion of the past, and in that oblivion our interest is deeper even than hers. . . .*

Criticisms and abuse followed and then Lord Salisbury's savage exposure of the weakness in the Bill. The atmosphere "became thick and hot with political passion." The division among Gladstone's followers was not his only cross. England fell into opposed camps upon the issue and hostesses censored their lists of guests according to their attitude to the Irish question. The veneer of

politeness was deeply scratched by the controversy, and when Mr. Gladstone wished to celebrate a royal birthday with a dinner party, feeling was so bitter that he was "seriously perplexed." He wrote to Lord Granville, "Hardly any peers of the higher ranks will be available, and not many of the lower. . . . Lastly, it has become customary for the Prince of Wales to dine with me on that day, and he brings his eldest son now that the young Prince is of age. But his position would be very awkward, if he comes and witnesses a great nakedness of the land."

The Queen wrestled with one of the most violent crises in her reign. She contemplated the Home Rule Bill with horror. No conversation at Windsor could pass without reference to the plot of Mr. Gladstone. He was ruining the country. Even when the Queen wrote to Lord Tennyson, while his son was dying, she could not resist a sentence of complaint. "I cannot in this letter allude to politics, but I know what your feelings must be." The Poet Laureate answered, "Since your Majesty touches upon the disastrous policy of the day I may say that I wish I may be in my own grave, beyond sight and hearing, when an English army fires upon the loyalists of Ulster."

The anxiety passed in the summer. On June 9th one of Lord Salisbury's sons was waiting at the Hatfield telegraph office for the news of the division which had been held at one o'clock in the morning. Telephones were not then used in private houses. It is said that when the news came, at three o'clock in the morning, this loyal young Cecil ran up the hill towards the park gates, making such a bedlam of shouting and cheering over the Liberal fall that the village sleepers were awakened. Lord Salisbury had been waiting in his room all night for the news of Mr. Gladstone's failure.

In June the parties again paraded their talents in an election and Mr. Gladstone returned to the scenes of his conquest in Midlothian. "The whole a scene of triumph," he wrote on June 22nd. "God help us, His poor creatures." On June 28th, he spoke in Hengler's Circus. "Few buildings give so noble a presentation of an audience. Once more my voice held out in a marvellous manner. I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit, but the hand of the Lord was upon me." Mr. Gladstone was obliged to depend upon human

votes as well as Divine co-operation and when the results of the election were declared in July, the opponents of Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy exceeded its friends by a majority of one hundred and ten.

Again the venerable leader went to the Queen with his seals. A strain of sadness runs through Mr. Gladstone's record of the conversation—his "closing audience," he wrote, and probably his "last word with the Sovereign after fifty-five years of political life, and a good quarter of a century's service rendered to her in office."

"The Queen was in good spirits; her manners altogether pleasant. She made me sit at once. Asked after my wife as we began, and sent a kind message to her as we ended. About me personally, I think her single remark was that I should require some rest. I remember that on a closing audience in 1874 she said she felt sure I might be reckoned upon to support the Throne. She did not say anything of the sort to-day. Her mind and opinions have since that day been seriously warped, and I respect her for the scrupulous avoidance of anything which could have seemed to indicate a desire on her part to claim anything in common with me."

The Queen could afford to be "altogether pleasant." Eight days before, she had written to her new Prime Minister, "Lord Salisbury knows what confidence she reposes in him."

Lord Salisbury waited on the Queen at Osborne on July 24th, and when they were sitting together, planning the Cabinet which was to bring her a long spell of security and contentment, she observed that her Minister looked "remarkably well." Mr. Gladstone, who had looked "ill and haggard" when she saw him in May, was planning a rest in Bavaria: in "an out-of-the-way place, peaceful and silent."

There were fewer ripples on the political sea. The Queen was disturbed because Lord Randolph Churchill, "so mad and odd," and who said "some strange things" to her when he dined, was to be Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House. This she "did not like." But Lord Randolph was to resign before the new Government was more than five months old, and if there were

other alarms, Lord Salisbury did his best to shield her from them.

The Queen encouraged her Minister. "Lord Salisbury will succeed," she wrote. "Lord Beaconsfield raised up the position of Great Britain, from '74 to '80, in a marvellous manner. Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville pulled it down during the five years of their mischievous and fatal misrule, but already in seven months, Lord Salisbury raised our position again."

The reactions in Europe from the change of Government were immediate. Prince Bismarck shared the Queen's opinion, and spoke in Berlin of his confidence in Salisbury. Once Sir Edward Malet was distressed by the news that his wife was ill while on a visit to England. He was anxious lest contemporary affairs might suffer in his absence from the Embassy in Berlin, and he admitted his fears to Prince Bismarck. The Chancellor assured him that he need feel no anxiety in absenting himself so long as Lord Salisbury was at the Foreign Office.

Lord Salisbury did not act as Foreign Secretary during the first few months of the new Government. The office was given to Lord Iddesleigh. But Lord Salisbury exercised the control over foreign policy which slowly raised England's reputation among the Powers. A test of the will of the new Cabinet came in August when the Balkans staged another theatrical scene, inspired by Russian agents. The Balkan States were overrun by Russian spies and agents. Bribery and treachery burst into flower in August, when Prince Alexander of Bulgaria, brother-in-law of Princess Beatrice, was kidnapped "by night in his palace." In the manner of the many theatrical pieces inspired by the Balkans, the unhappy Prince was forced by threats of death to sign his abdication. The troops he had led to victory against Serbia turned upon him, and he was cartied down the Danube and handed over to a Russian gendarme. This plot gave the first months of Lord Salisbury's Ministry the material and impetus they needed. Floods of moral indignation poured from Windsor and from Whitehall. The "bad and wicked" Emperor, so unhappily tied to the Queen's family by marriage, stirred her to defend the wretched Prince. She saw in the plot still another "stepping stone" by which the Russians wished to usurp power in the Balkans and advance to Constantinople.

Prince Alexander returned to Sofia. At first, there were hopes

of his triumph, but there were attempts to upset his train and a plot to murder him in the Cathedral. His officers had been "debauched by foreign gold" and Russian influence had corrupted his officials beyond recall. He was obliged to resign his throne and leave the government of his country in the hands of a Regency. He travelled from Sofia to Windsor. The Queen wrote, "It seemed like a dream to see Sandro sitting quietly *amongst* us, after his having gone through such unspeakable dangers and horrors. . . . It was intensely interesting to hear him speak of his terrible experiences, but his poor face looked so sad while doing so."

Commiseration with Prince Alexander was suddenly displaced by another alarm over Balkan affairs. Prince Ferdinand of Coburg was proposed for the crown of Bulgaria. When this talented youth was chosen to be Prince of Bulgaria in 1887 the Queen read the first announcement with grave fears. She thought him "totally unfit—delicate, eccentric, and effeminate." She talked of the "absurd pretension of this foolish young cousin of mine," but she could not thwart the plan. The fantastic scholar was elected Prince of Bulgaria in July, and twenty-one years afterwards he was proclaimed King.

Except for her alarm over Prince Alexander's abdication, the Queen showed signs of confidence in the letters which she wrote between the months of August and November. Her Journal also reveals a calmer spirit. Every night Princess Beatrice came to her, between ten and eleven o'clock, to write down her mother's recollections of the day. The signs of age were upon the Queen. Her eyes were tired and she could no longer walk in the Park with the grace and poise which had given such beauty to her movements when she was young. When she opened Parliament in 1886, Prince "Eddy" had been obliged to help her up the steps "quite nicely," and Princess Beatrice, who stood on her right hand all through the gruelling ceremony, helped her down again when all was over. Some months afterwards the Queen wrote, "Feel very tired and exhausted, being really much overdone, and fell asleep in my chair, after tea—a very rare thing for me."

The Queen wrote more naturally of the Prince of Wales in her Journal. Ten years before, she had dreaded having him, or anybody, standing near to her on a public occasion. But this had passed, and

when she went to open the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in May, the Prince walked beside her, past the groups of Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians and South Africans, Lascars and Parsees. She had found the walk among the displays of her Empire "very long and fatiguing." But "Bertie" had kindly helped her "up and down the steps" whenever they came to any. Late at night, before she went to bed in Buckingham Palace, the Queen dictated to Princess Beatrice:

"How pleased my darling husband would have been at the whole thing, and who knows but that his pure bright spirit looks down upon his poor little wife, his children and children's children, with pleasure, on the development of his work. . . . Dear Bertie, who was most kind throughout. . . . kissed my hand. What thoughts of my darling husband came into my mind, who was the originator of the idea of an exhibition. . . ."

1886-1887

The Prince of Wales had been eager with suggestions when Lord Salisbury formed his new Government in July. When he knew that his friend Lord Randolph Churchill was to be in the Cabinet he was elated, although Lord Randolph was himself "rather nervous of the promotion." The Prince sponsored three more politicians of lesser talents: Lord Cadogan, who was appointed Lord Privy Seal, Lord Londonderry, who was appointed Viceroy of Ireland, and Lord Charles Beresford, who became Fourth Lord of the Admiralty. The Prince's recommendations were urged by his affection and friendship as much as by his good judgment. The choice of Lord Cadogan and Lord Londonderry was successful, and Lord Salisbury thanked the Prince for "the kindness and efficiency" with which he had assisted him over the appointment to Ireland. But the choice of the boisterous Irish sailor, Lord Charles Beresford, was not happy. An aptitude for practical jokes at Sandringham and the legend of his witty telegrams did not recommend him to the sages of Whitehall.

The appointment in which the Prince might have felt full confidence—that of Lord Randolph Churchill—ended disastrously at the close of the year. Lord Randolph's brilliance was already

acknowledged, but he was still young and impatient. He was thirty-six years old when Lord Salisbury imposed honours upon him, hoping that his talents would find maturity in office. On September 17th, Lord Salisbury wrote to Lady Salisbury of his self-willed protégé: "When Randolph hints that, if I go, he is capable of all kinds of monkey tricks, I feel he can be as good as his word."

Lord Randolph alarmed the Cabinet at a meeting in November by saying: "It is an idle schoolboy dream to suppose that Tories can legislate. . . . I certainly have not the energy and courage to go on struggling against cliques, as poor Dizzy did all his life." He resigned from the Chancellorship on December 23rd, when the Cabinet refused to sponsor his proposal to reduce the Naval and Military Estimates. There was too much talk of war abroad to make the plan attractive to the Cabinet.

The resignation interrupted a graceful scene. Hatfield was gay with the music and lights of a Christmas ball, and among the guests were Princess Mary of Teck and her daughter, Princess May. Princess Mary was sitting upon a sofa with Lord Salisbury when their talk was interrupted by the arrival of a box. The Prime Minister paused to read the letter of resignation, which was a terrible blow to his Government. Then he turned to the Princess and went on with the conversation as if nothing untoward had happened.

The Queen read the "startling" news in *The Times*. Lord Randolph had dined at Windsor only a few nights before when there had not been "a symptom of resigning." That very night, while he was a guest at the Castle, after hoodwinking her with talk of the coming Session, he had written his letter of resignation to Lord Salisbury.

The friendship between the Prince and Lord Randolph was not affected by the Ministerial mishap. They continued to appear together at race meetings and the Prince ignored his mother's reproaches against one who was "so changeable and indiscreet." The Prince's loyalty, often pursued with stubbornness, did not falter under Lord Salisbury's dilemma or his mother's disgust. He made an ill-chosen attempt to pacify his mother by suggesting that he might reconcile the Prime Minister and his unruly pupil with a view to Lord Randolph's joining the Cabinet again.

The weakening of the Government alarmed both the Queen and her Minister. Before Lord Salisbury accepted office in July he had approached Lord Hartington, hoping that he would join him together with those Liberals who had deserted Mr. Gladstone over the Home Rule Bill. The first overture had been unsuccessful, partly because Lord Randolph was to be in the new Government. Now that this obstacle was removed, the Queen approached Lord Hartington again, together with his colleague, Mr. Goschen, entreating them to agree to the formation of a Coalition Government. Her appeal to Lord Hartington failed, but Mr. Goschen consented, while remaining a Liberal, to accept the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Conservative ship was thus saved, but it was to suffer one more disaster before Lord Salisbury's Cabinet settled down to a semblance of equanimity.

Lord Iddesleigh had been warned by his doctor that the glass "was cracked," and that it might "break at any moment." In the reshuffling of offices, forced upon Lord Salisbury by the retirement of Lord Randolph, Lord Iddesleigh resigned office to facilitate the inclusion of the Liberal Unionists. This sad end to his career was turned to tragedy by his sudden death in the ante-room of No. 10 Downing Street, where he was waiting to see the Prime Minister, who arrived just in time to see his friend die.

The year 1887 began in confusion. Lord Salisbury added the Foreign Office to his burdens, Mr. W. H. Smith was appointed First Lord of the Treasury and Leader of the House of Commons, and, after a few weeks, Mr. Arthur Balfour became Chief Secretary for Ireland.

## *Chapter Forty-four*

1887

The documents which are left from 1887, the year of the first Jubilee, reveal a tussle between glory and depression. The story of Ireland was increased by one hopeful chapter, contributed by Mr. Arthur Balfour, the new Secretary. Mr. Balfour was a nephew of Lord Salisbury, and he inherited the family cloaks of scholarship and statesmanship. Balfour had accompanied his uncle to Berlin for the celebrated Congress in 1879, and he had linked this first experience of diplomacy with the writing of his erudite and thoughtful *Defence of Philosophic Doubt*. From these varied experiences he had faded into the habits of a dilettante for some time, associating himself with the elegant coterie of intellectuals called the *Souls*, and hiding his strength and ability behind academic abstraction.

For some years Mr. Balfour had not been considered seriously as a politician, although his personal qualities had won him many friends. The Queen had thought him "singularly charming and agreeable" and she had recorded the steps of his progress in the House with pleasure.

The *Freeman* had greeted Mr. Balfour's election to the Irish Secretaryship with phrases which were amusing to those who observed his final achievement.

"It seems like breaking a butterfly on the wheel to extend Mr. Balfour on the rack of Irish politics. He is an elegant, fragile creature, a prey to that aristocratic languor which prevents him from assuming any but the limpest attitude. We are convinced of his inevitable failure as we are of our own existence."

But the "lispings hawthorn bird" and "scented popinjay" brought imagination into Irish affairs. "He believed that the cancer which was sapping away the vitality of Ireland was not so much political injustice as the extreme poverty and wretchedness of its people. He satisfied himself that the evils were mainly economic, and he determined to subordinate and direct his whole policy to the end of bringing a comfortable livelihood within the reach of the Irish peasantry."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Arthur James Balfour*, Bernard Alderson, p. 67.

This high and noble ambition was not to be realised in Balfour's lifetime. But his first legislation, the Crimes Bill, which braved and survived the storms of opposition, made it possible for the Viceroy to write a reassuring letter to the Queen in December. He had waited long enough for the Bill to be "given a fair trial," he wrote. He feared to take a "too sanguine view," but he could not conceal from himself that law and order were being gradually restored even in the most disaffected districts. He wrote, "Further improvement may be hoped for." Lord Londonderry regarded the improvement as due to the administering of Mr. Balfour's Act, "with firmness," and the policy of attacking the leading agitators instead of the "small men."

Mr. Balfour's name was not the only new one, "shining with the first promise of success" in the political story of the year. On February 8th, Sir Edward Grey made what the Queen described as "a maiden speech of much promise and interest," and on March 24th, Mr. W. H. Smith wrote to the Queen of Mr. Asquith, "a new member, who spoke with considerable ability."

The most important step in foreign policy for the year was Lord Salisbury's secret understanding with Italy and Austria for common defence in the Mediterranean and the Near East.

In July of 1887, Letsie, Chief of the Basutos, wrote to Queen Victoria:

*Many of my people don't understand that a person can live so many years as Queen, and many even go so far as to say that she must long ago have gone to her rest, and that it is her fame and glory which remain. . . . For us, it is a curious thing that a woman should be a Queen. . . .*

The habit of fifty years had caused many people to forget that it was "curious" that a lonely woman should rule half the world. On June 20th millions upon millions of people trembled with excitement at the sudden realisation of the Queen's achievement. The first Jubilee festivals were in India, in February. On the 16th, the Hindus "were shown fireworks far superior to any they had ever seen before." Lord Dufferin wrote, "The principal feature was the outline of your Majesty's head, traced in lines of fire, which

unexpectedly burst on the vision of the astonished crowd. The likeness was admirable. . . ."

From this first tribute the waves grew and touched every corner of the Empire. They surged back to England and to Windsor, where, day after day, the Queen was surrounded by glory. The Princes from India, heavy with jewels, came to Windsor and held out their swords for the Queen to touch. Some bowed before her with their hands held as if in prayer. Her Indian servants, dressed in scarlet with white turbans, kissed her feet in the morning when she sat down to breakfast. The Kings of Denmark, Greece, Saxony and the Belgians came, and the Queen of Hawaii, with a gift of precious feathers. The Crown Princes of Germany, Austria and Portugal came, and Princes from Persia, Japan and Siam. For ten days the Queen lived through a deluge of tributes and celebrations.

One afternoon, the Thakore of Morvi rode up to Windsor Castle, where the ghosts of Elizabethan and Plantagenet gallants might have observed him. He was mounted on a young horse, covered by a coat of mail, splendidly caparisoned, with heavy ornamented tassels hanging down and an amulet on one leg. The Queen met the Prince at the Castle entrance. He had brought his horse all the way from the banks of the Machhu to greet her. The Thakore leapt to the ground, bowed, and begged the Queen to accept his noble charger. It was all part of a fairy tale.

The great day was June 20th. The Queen wrote in her Journal:

"The day has come, and I am alone, though surrounded by many dear children. I am writing . . . in the garden at Buckingham Palace; here I used to sit so often in former happy days. Fifty years to-day since I came to the throne!"

She had "hurried" her dressing in the morning at Windsor, so that she could go down to breakfast at Frogmore, before travelling up to London where more than thirty Royal Princes were waiting at Buckingham Palace to greet her. The morning of the 21st

"was beautiful and bright with fresh air. Troops began passing early with bands playing, and one heard constant cheering. . . . Received many beautiful nosegays and presents. . . . Then dressed, wearing a dress and bonnet trimmed with white point d'Alençon

diamond ornaments in my bonnet, and pearls round my neck with all my orders.

"At half-past eleven we left the Palace . . . it was really a magnificent sight. . . . The crowds from the Palace gates up to the Abbey were enormous, and there was such an extraordinary outburst of enthusiasm as I had hardly ever seen in London before; all the people seemed to be in a good humour. The old Chelsea pensioners were in a stand near to the Arch. . . . We Princesses went into a little waiting-room. . . . When all was ready, the procession was formed. . . . *God Save the Queen* was played, and then changed to Handel's *Occasional Overture*, as I walked slowly up the Nave and Choir, which looked beautiful, all filled with people. . . .

"I sat *alone* (oh! without my beloved husband, for whom this would have been such a proud day!) where I sat forty-nine years ago. . . . My robes were beautifully draped on the chair. . . . When the service was concluded, each of my sons, sons-in-law, grandsons . . . and grandsons-in-law, stepped forward, bowed, and in succession kissed my hand, I kissing each. . . .

"Only at four did we sit down to luncheon, to which all came. . . . I felt quite exhausted by this time and ready to faint, so I got into my rolling chair and was rolled away to my room. Here I lay down on the sofa and rested, doing nothing but opening telegrams. . . ."

In the evening the Queen travelled down to Windsor. Just as she was beginning dessert she heard that a torchlight procession of Eton boys had arrived in the quadrangle of the Castle.

" . . . Off we hurried, as fast as we could, to the corridor from whence we could see it beautifully. . . . Then we all went down to the Quadrangle, and I said, in as loud a voice as I could, 'I thank you very much. . . .' The Round Tower was illuminated with electric lights. . . . The town was also illuminated, but I was too tired to go and see it. . . ."

In October the Prince of Wales unveiled a statue of the Queen at Balmoral, and, on the 10th, he left the Castle. The Queen again turned to her Journal and wrote:

"An early luncheon, after which dear Bertie left, having had a most pleasant visit, which I think he enjoyed and said so repeatedly. He had not stayed alone with me, excepting for a couple of days in May in '68, at Balmoral, since he married! He is so kind and affectionate that it is a pleasure to be a little quietly together."

1887-1888

Queen Victoria could not resist the appeal which had been made to her during the celebration of her first Jubilee. She was drawn more closely into the lives of her people, and, instead of greeting age as a reason for further retirement, she threw off more of the sable trappings of bereavement and life at Court became almost gay again.

A few days before her sixty-eighth birthday the Queen held a drawing-room at Buckingham Palace, for the first time allowing certain "poor divorced ladies," who had had to "divorce their husbands owing to cruelty, desertion, and misbehaviour," to appear before her. On the 11th she had driven to Westminster Abbey to see the preparations for her Jubilee service, walking among the masses of boarding and lumber, placing flowers upon Lady Augusta Stanley's tomb, and pausing to see some of the monuments. Afterwards she had received Lord Salisbury, to talk over the plan for opening the People's Palace, which was to be one of the functions in the week of her Jubilee. She had agreed to take tea at the Mansion House, which she would not have dreamed of doing two years before. From her interview with her Minister, she had hurried off to Earl's Court to see "a very extraordinary and interesting sight—a performance of Buffalo Bill's Wild West," and then, with no complaint of tiredness, she had returned to dine at Windsor.

Plays and tableaux were among the signs of her increased happiness. The Queen busied herself about these entertainments, and when she drove with her ladies, the arrangements would be discussed. One day a young and nervous lady sat next to her in the carriage, and the following conversation ensued:

The Queen: "Have you any suggestions for your next tableau?"  
 The Lady (harassed by the sudden question): "Well, Ma'am,

could we not have the scene of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots?"

The Queen: "Certainly not. How could you think of such a thing? You must suggest something better than that."

The Lady: "Well, Ma'am, do you think we could do some scenes from the life of the Pretender?"

The Queen: "We never speak of the Pretender. You mean Prince Charles Edward."

1888

Queen Victoria's feelings had always been torn between the diplomatic needs of her country and her personal anxiety for those of her relatives who were ruling princes in Germany. Glory came to her as the revered mother of the Courts of Europe, but also anxiety when the ambitions of these Courts did not agree with the aims of her own Government. She had realised this parting of the ways many times as Prince Bismarck forced his mighty plans upon Central Europe. The invasion of Schleswig-Holstein had divided her heart between her daughter and her daughter-in-law. The humiliation of Hesse-Darmstadt had divided her daughters (one married in Prussia and one in Darmstadt), and the ambitions of Russia threatened to estrange her from the wife of her son, Prince Alfred. Nobody else in the world, living or dead, had existed upon such a domestic volcano as the Queen. Some magic quality in her influence made it possible for her to survive the eruptions which continually shook her reign.

Prince Bismarck had been such a fiery Wotan in the story of the advance of Prussian influence, that the German Emperor, his son, the Crown Prince Frederick, and his grandson, Prince William, were overshadowed for more than twenty years of German history. Emperor William I had been relegated to picturesque ineptitude by the powers of his first Minister. His gentle qualities were drowned in the crashing symphony of Imperial Germany.

The Emperor died in March of 1888. At the time of his death, his son, Prince Frederick, was also fatally ill in Charlottenburg: all the hopes and plans associated with his accession were to come to nothing.

In April, Queen Victoria went to Berlin to see her daughter. The Queen arrived at the Palace on the morning of the 24th, and went to her rooms, "charmingly arranged and done up by dear Vicky. They were the rooms of Frederick the Great, and have never been lived in since. . . ."

"After I had tidied myself up a bit," wrote the Queen, "dear Vicky came and asked me to go and see dear Fritz. He was lying in bed, his dear face unaltered; and he raised up both his hands with pleasure at seeing me, and gave me a nosegay. It was very touching and sad to see him thus in bed."

The Queen drove from Charlottenburg into Berlin, to see the Dowager Empress ". . . in deep mourning, with a long veil, seated in a chair, quite crumpled up and deathly pale, really a rather ghastly sight. Her voice was so weak it was hardly audible. . . ."

Next day Prince Bismarck was brought to the Queen, unmistakably nervous and ill at ease when he asked, before going into the room, whether the Queen would be "seated or standing." She was "agreeably surprised to find him so amiable and gentle," but, if there was victory for either of these rulers, it was for the Queen. Prince Bismarck could not resist the temptation to boast of Germany's army. The final gesture of graciousness was from the Queen. She hoped, she said, that Princess Bismarck would come to see her at the British Embassy in the afternoon, ". . . this seemed to give him much pleasure." One courtier who saw Bismarck after he withdrew from the Queen's presence said that the Chancellor wiped sweat from his forehead and remarked, "That was a woman! One could do business with her!"

When the Queen left Berlin, her daughter went with her to the train and burst into tears. ". . . it was terrible to see her standing there . . . while the train moved slowly off, and to think of all she was suffering and might have to go through."

As the Queen was sitting in the cottage of one of her friends at Balmoral, in June, Princess Beatrice brought her a telegram telling of the Emperor Frederick's death. "My poor dear Vicky, God help her," the Queen cried. Nine days afterwards Emperor William II spoke at the opening of the Reichstag, "of a leaning towards Russia," but he made "no mention of England."

1889

The wild behaviour of the young Emperor disturbed the serenity of many lives in 1889 and 1890, and the pretensions with which he assumed the Crown lost him the affection and trust of his relations in England. He soon proved himself unfit for the rôle of Constitutional Monarch, attacking the problems of his country in the theatrical manner of an insecure ruler in the East rather than as an Emperor in Europe. The rift between the British and German Royal families widened in October of 1888, when the Emperor accused his uncle, the Prince of Wales, of not treating him with the respect due to him as an Emperor. The Queen expressed the general reaction to this complaint by describing it as "too *vulgar* and too absurd, as well as untrue. . . ."

The exchange of angry messages between the Emperor and Prince, always through third persons, culminated in a ridiculous scene in Vienna when the Prince of Wales was obliged to leave because, it was alleged, his nephew did not wish to meet him there.

This affront drew the Queen and her son together more closely than ever, and when the Emperor later expressed his wish to visit England the Queen said that he "must make some sort of apology, before he comes, to the Prince of Wales." To her son she wrote, "William must *not* come *this* year; *you* could not meet him, and I could *not* after all he has said and done."

Perhaps the Emperor momentarily regretted the pompous declaration he had made to his grandmother in regard to the Emperor of Austria. He had written to her: "We Emperors must stand together." At least he realised that his wounded pride as a nephew could not be allowed to stem his progress as an Emperor. In March, after the tiff had been patched up largely because of the Prince's chivalry and patience, the Emperor again pressed his wish to visit England. This time the Queen was obliged to swallow her pride and resentment in the cause of international peace. She accepted Lord Salisbury's suggestion that her unruly grandson had perhaps "awakened from the temporary intoxication of the summer." "It is your Majesty's interest," wrote Lord Salisbury, "to make his penitential return as easy for him as possible." It was the Prince of Wales's own appeal to his mother which finally induced her to receive the Emperor. Generosity of mind and good

nature were the Prince's most engaging characteristics. He went to Osborne and begged his mother not to continue her rancour against her grandson.

An interesting document<sup>1</sup> has recently come to light, telling the full story of the "Vienna incident." Prince Christian reported to the British Foreign Office that on April 8th, 1889, the Emperor talked with him of his "approaching visit to England." "He expressed his satisfaction at the Queen's amiable invitation. . . . I thought the moment opportune to exploit the Kaiser's good humour by turning the conversation on to the subject of the mission with which I had been entrusted by the Prince of Wales. . . . I mentioned that Prince Reuss had told Sir A. Paget that the Kaiser had not wished to see the P. of W. in V[ienna] and that the latter had thereby been placed in the painful position of having to leave Vienna, and I added that it would be desirable to clear up this misunderstanding. I further suggested that the Kaiser should send a friendly message to the P. of W. expressing his regret. . . . The Kaiser took my remarks in the main, in a friendly spirit, but I perceived that he felt a certain degree of ill-humour towards the P. of W. . . . The Kaiser declared most emphatically that he had *never* expressed a wish that the P. of W. should leave Vienna and this must be a misunderstanding.

"I thereupon urged him to write this to the P. of W. and to express his regret. The Kaiser replied rather warmly that he could not do this as it was not a mere question of 'Uncle' and 'Nephew' but of 'the Kaiser' and 'Prince of Wales.' As it was not clear to me what he meant, I pointed out to him that he ought to be the first to make a concession as the P. of W. was also a 'big man' and that the first move should come from him (the Kaiser) and that if the matter were not settled before his departure for England the P. of W. would be compelled to avoid him."

Prince Christian saw the Emperor five days later and repeated his request. "On the occasion of this interview I made another attempt to induce the Kaiser to send a friendly message to the P. of W., but he replied that he could not do anything more and

<sup>1</sup> Memorandum by H.R.H. Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, who was sent to Berlin at the suggestion of the Prince of Wales, in the hope of reconciling the Emperor before he came to England.

that as he had never uttered the alleged wish he could not express regret for something that he had never said, but that he too was most anxious that there should be a mutual understanding and that he looked forward to seeing the P. of W. in England."

Prince Christian added, "the Kaiser is as yet too new to his position to feel quite sure of himself and of his ability to do the right thing. He is therefore constantly afraid of compromising his dignity, and he is particularly sensitive lest his older relatives should treat him as the 'Nephew' and not as 'the Kaiser.' "

The Queen began what was almost a campaign of favours for her heir about this time. Her whole-hearted support of his grievance was followed by graceful gestures of affection, and in April she spent four or five days at Sandringham, which she had not visited since her son's illness in December, 1871.

In his own home the Prince entertained his mother after his elegant and amusing fashion. Sandringham had put on its gayest feathers for the Queen. "It was a very pretty sight," she wrote. "Everything came back to my mind, as we drove in at the gates. . . . All was the same as at that terrible time, and yet all was so different. . . . Bertie and Alix then took me upstairs to the well-known old rooms, which have been freshly done up. . . ."

On the last evening the party went down to the ballroom, which had been converted into a theatre. When the Queen went to her sitting-room, at one o'clock in the morning, she wrote in her Journal:

"We sat in the front row, I between Bertie and Alix. The stage was beautifully arranged, and with great scenic effects, and the pieces were splendidly mounted, and with numbers of people taking part. I believe there were between sixty and seventy, as well as the orchestra. The piece, *The Bells*, is a melodrama . . . . and is very thrilling. The hero (Irving) though a mannerist of the Macready type, acted wonderfully. He is a murderer, and frequently imagines he hears the bells of the horses in the sledge, in which sat the Polish Jew, whom he murdered. . . . *The Bells* was followed by the trial scene from *The Merchant of Venice*, in which Irving played the part of Shylock extremely well, and Miss Ellen Terry that of Portia beautifully. . . . I waited a moment in

the drawing-room to speak to Irving and Ellen Terry. He is very gentlemanlike, and she, very pleasing and handsome."

Next morning the Queen returned to Windsor, after a "very pleasant time under dear Bertie and Alix's hospitable roof." She was "greatly touched by all their kindness and affection."

The false domestic peace which followed the Emperor's quarrel with the Prince of Wales made it possible for him to visit the Queen in August. She had written him a "civil letter" in May, "accepting his disclaimer of having had anything to do with the Vienna incident." In June she conferred the rank of British Admiral upon him, as a courteous answer to his offer of an Honorary Colonelcy of the 1st Regiment of his Dragoon Guards. The Emperor's acknowledgment of the honour, sent to Sir Edward Malet, gives some idea of his state of mind on the eve of his visit to his grandmother.

" . . . the last sentence of your letter fairly overwhelmed me! What a surprise and an agreeable one tool Fancy wearing the same uniform as St. Vincent and Nelson; it is enough to make one quite giddy. I feel something like Macbeth must have felt when he was suddenly received by the witches with the cry of 'All hail, who are Thane of Glamis and of Cawdor too.' "

There was a gay postscript to the letter: "I beg to be allowed to remark that I do not look upon you as a witch, but more as a good fairy."

The Queen was seventy years old when the added domestic tumults of the German Court were thrust upon her. On June 15th, she wrote, "Still in pain, and have to be carried up and down stairs, which is too tiresome." Next day she was "able to walk alone with a stick from room to room." In this sorry state the Queen received her Ministers, and she sat up late at night over her letters. On July 4th, as further manifestation of her devotion to the Prince, she went up to London, in great pain, to meet his guests at a party in the gardens of Marlborough House. She returned to Windsor in the evening, and she had "a dreadful night." Next day she sat in the garden at Frogmore, writing her letters in the little tea-house

which she had built among the trees. When her letters were finished, she went over to the Mausoleum, past the cedar-tree beneath which she used to take tea with Prince Albert and her mother. When she came to the far side of the lake she was so tired that she had to be carried up the steps into the Mausoleum.

The conflicts and changes in Germany were so dramatic in 1890 that home affairs seemed to be dwarfed in importance. There were troubles enough in Ireland, Africa and Canada, but they were overshadowed by the forced resignation of Prince Bismarck in June. The young Emperor's high-handed dismissal of the Chancellor shook every Court and Government in Europe. The Emperor William excused his decision on account of the Chancellor's age and ungovernable temper. Also he said, "I have been educated politically by the Prince, and now I must show what I can do."

In March the Prince of Wales declared his peaceful intentions by accepting the Emperor's invitation for both himself and his second son, Prince George, to visit Berlin. Prince George was twenty-five years of age. For some time he had been serving with the Navy, and he was well equipped to talk of seafaring to his cousin if the conversation tended that way. The last drop of German blood had faded from the British Royal Family before Prince George was born. He was more English than the English. His ancestors had thriven upon Goethe and Schiller, but he had pledged himself to Surtees and Whyte Melville, and his nature was divided between the trusty, bluff officer in the Navy and the English squire, devoted to his own acres. Every modest, solid quality of British character was exemplified in him. Prince George's feelings for Germany had never been a matter for doubt. It is said that he once deplored the time he spent in Heidelberg, "learning their beastly language."

Both father and son welcomed every peaceful gesture from the Emperor while they were in Berlin and there was no apparent resentment of the unfortunate incident in Vienna the year before. "William did all in his power to make it very agreeable and interesting," the Prince of Wales wrote to his mother.

While the Prince of Wales was watching his nephew's magnificent soldiers, observing the new rifles and the new smokeless powder at the School of Musketry, Prince Bismarck, a virulent veteran of seventy-five, was realising a degree of anger never aroused in him before. The mighty designer of Imperial Germany had been

dismissed by the very man in whom he had staked his faith. The Prince of Wales hid his political excitement during the grand programme which the Emperor had arranged for him, but when he was free, for the last three days in Berlin, he sought an interview with the dismissed Chancellor. "The old Prince was terribly hurt and pained," the Prince wrote to the Queen.

The democratic Government of Britain has slowly lessened the direct power of Royalty, but, with this loss, British Sovereigns have gained a more subtle influence over the increasing millions of their subjects. The influence began towards the end of the last century, when the 1887 Jubilee brought the thoughts of a scattered Empire home to Britain in loyalty and affection. The Queen was never wholly conscious of her influence, and when expressions of devotion were forced on her she was often surprised. She expected and demanded loyalty, because she was the Sovereign of an Empire. But personal tributes were not expected. When she drove in a closed carriage to place a wreath on the grave of Lady Ely at Kensal Green, she wrote in her Journal, "There were crowds out, we could not understand why, and thought something must be going [on], but it turned out it was only to see me."

The Queen, who was devoid of vanity, never allowed the popularity of her later years to lessen her hold upon her position as a monarch. She clung tenaciously to every symbol of relationship with her people as Sovereign, independent of the power of Parliament. She agreed that democratic legislation was good for industry, colonisation, civic responsibility and society, but she never admitted the right of politicians to step in between herself and her Army. This conception of the relationship between Sovereign and Army (proved to be right in almost every chapter of military history) caused the Queen deep resentment in the spring of 1890, when the Hartington Commission recommended that the office of Commander-in-Chief should be abolished. The Commander-in-Chief was the Duke of Cambridge. The Queen pleaded, not in her name, but in that of her successors. She must, she said, "hand down to her son and grandson her crown unimpaired." The Cabinet rejected the proposal, but not before the Queen had declared a principle which the Government did not dare to shake. She wrote, "One of the greatest prerogatives of the Sovereign is the *direct communication*,

with an immovable and non-political officer of high rank, *about the Army. . . .*"

1890-1891

There were many dismal events in the new year to keep the Queen at her desk through long and anxious hours. The scandal of Mr. Parnell's divorce and the consequent split in the Irish Nationalist Party caused by Mr. Gladstone's reaction to the moral outrage, the death of Mr. W. H. Smith, the Leader of the House, and a rising of the Hindus in the hill state of Manipur, called for endless correspondence. But a deep-rooted spirit of happiness appeared in the Queen's Journal, and she no longer courted the release of death. The entry in her Journal on January 1st is the most significant evidence of the change:

". . . May God enable me to become worthier, less full of weakness and failings, and may He preserve me yet for some years!"

Twenty-nine years before, she had written, "The things of this world are of no interest to the Queen . . . . *her thoughts are fixed above.*" But there were signs of joy in 1891. A few weeks before the end of the year the Queen had joined in an evening party at Balmoral. They had "pushed the furniture back, and had a nice little impromptu dance." Although she was already lame and obliged to walk from her room with a stick, she danced in a quadrille with her grandson. "I did quite well," she wrote, "then followed some waltzes and polkas." The Prince's theatrical company at Sandringham had stimulated the Queen to revive her patronage of the stage, and twice in March of 1891 she received players at Windsor. The once cold spaces of the Waterloo Chamber rang with the jolly music of *The Gondoliers*. The Grand Inquisitor was "most absurd" and Miss Jessie Bond, "a clever little actress," sang "quite nicely." In July, Paderewski, "pale, with a sort of aureole of gold hair," played at Windsor, and on another day, the de Reszkes and Melba sang for the Queen. On March 17th, Mr. Hare presented *A Pair of Spectacles* in the Waterloo Chamber. It was "extremely good." Afterwards, the Queen received the actors in the drawing-room,

noting that Mr. Hare was "a gentleman as so many [actors] are nowadays."

The Parnell divorce scandal and Mr. Gladstone's moral indignation and recoil from the Irish Nationalist Party gave Mr. Balfour a rich opportunity for legislation during the sessions of Parliament in 1891. His Land Bill was passed; also the Tithe Bill which provided that the responsibility for the payment of tithe should be transferred from tenants to landowners. A third blessing was added to the legislation, with the support of Mr. Chamberlain, in the Education Bill, which afterwards gave free tuition to eighty-three per cent of the children attending English schools. At the Queen's suggestion, Mr. Balfour had succeeded to the Leadership of the House when Mr. Smith died in October, and he had justified the faith placed in him by both Sovereign and Prime Minister. Even the Irish members admitted Mr. Balfour's success. "The tone of the Irish members towards Mr. Balfour has much changed," the Queen wrote to Mr. Goschen, who was temporary Leader of the House of Commons when Mr. Smith was ill. "Though they are occasionally violent, they do not care to conceal their admiration for his great ability, and appear to enjoy his retorts and replies to their arguments and suggestions."

So popular did Mr. Balfour become among Irish peasants that one old woman was heard addressing her pig as "Arthur James."

Not many of the Queen's eighty years passed without some private sorrow or public disaster to mar her happiness. The year 1892 began with the death of the Duke of Clarence. The death of the Queen's grandson was increasingly sad because his betrothal to Princess Mary of Teck had been announced only a few weeks before. Prince Albert Victor had been waiting at Windsor one day when the Queen returned, with the shy request that he might speak to her alone. "I suspected something at once," wrote the Queen. "He came in and said, 'I have some good news to tell you; I am engaged to May Teck.'" The Queen had been delighted, for she had "much wished" for the marriage.

1892

In May Mr. Gladstone spoke in the House of Commons for more than an hour with a vigour and animation which Mr. Balfour

described to the Queen as "most remarkable in a man of eighty-two." When he was not in the House, or speaking to big audiences in the provinces, Gladstone retired to Hawarden. There he enjoyed his indignation against Lord Salisbury: there he turned to his scheme for Ireland, and to the physical exercise which was to equip his body for his last battle.

The slow pendulum of political favour swung back. In July of 1892 the sixth year of Lord Salisbury's Government ended. In May a meeting had been held at Devonshire House and Salisbury had announced to the Queen that it had been decided to dissolve Parliament at the end of June. The Queen was at Balmoral, dividing her days between the moors which she loved and the desk which she loved less. Her first thought in the event of the Conservative fall was to send for Lord Rosebery. She had long thought of him as her next Liberal Prime Minister, but, in the moment of being her favourite among the least favoured party, he attacked Lord Salisbury in a speech at Edinburgh.

The Queen said this made it *impossible* for her to send for him. The alternative was more than impossible. The "Grand Old Man" at eighty-two was "*a very alarming look-out.*" The Queen added in her letter to her secretary that she feared "*a great deal of trouble.*" The only compensations on the eve of the drastic political changes were in her family life. The Prince of Wales was tender and helpful and Prince George came and talked to her after breakfast. She thought him to be "*a dear boy with much character and most affectionate.*"

In July the Queen was at Osborne. The results of the elections came in slowly. On the 6th, the Conservatives had lost twelve seats but they had gained five. On July 7th, Mr. Gladstone "got in" for Midlothian with four hundred less majority than before. On July 20th, Sir Henry Ponsonby reported to his mistress that the Parliament which had just been elected was "*far more democratic than the former one*" and that the Labour Party "*must have a representative in the Government.*" The Queen saw no compensations in the disaster. She clung to the grim hope that the "*small and divided majority,*" and "*Mr. Gladstone's eyes and excitability,*" might keep them all in a state of uncertainty. She continued in a letter to Sir Henry Ponsonby, "*As for the trouble and fatigue to the*

Queen, which she feels particularly unfit for, not one of these greedy place-seekers . . . care a straw for what their old Sovereign suffers. This is a very bitter feeling. . . .

" . . . Lord Rosebery she *must* see and talk to *before* seeing *anyone else*, if there is an adverse vote. The Queen is glad that Mr. Gladstone is determined about his Home Rule, as that is sure to bring him into great difficulties. . . . Mr. Gladstone has brought so much personal violence into the contest, and used such insolent language, that the Queen is quite shocked and ashamed."

In her despair the Queen turned to her son. Lord Rosebery was on board a yacht and there was no way of bringing him into the grim shuffle of appointments and honours. The Queen suggested that the Prince of Wales might communicate with Rosebery, as a personal friend. The excitements crystallised into decision on August 11th, when the Government was defeated by a majority of forty votes. In the afternoon of August 12th, Lord Salisbury travelled down to Osborne to resign, and when the audience was over Queen Victoria wrote a bitter and chilling letter to his inevitable successor:

"Lord Salisbury having placed his resignation in the Queen's hands, which she has accepted with much regret, she now desires to ask Mr. Gladstone if he is prepared to try and form a Ministry to carry on the Government of the country.

"The Queen need scarcely add that she trusts that Mr. Gladstone and his friends will continue to maintain and promote the honour and welfare of her great Empire."

Queen Victoria left the subtle duty of inducing Lord Rosebery to accept the Foreign Secretaryship to the Prince of Wales. It was the first independent commission of this magnitude she had given him. ". . . It would not do for me to press Lord Rosebery to join this Government," the Queen wrote to the Prince. She had heard that Lord Rosebery did not wish "*to throw in his lot with these people*, as if he did so now he could never free himself from them and it would naturally ruin his career." The Queen wrote: "If I tried to press him and he did it *merely to oblige me against his own wish and convictions*, it would put me under obligations to him, and I might find myself in a very awkward position."

On the same day the Prince wrote a friendly and candid letter to Lord Rosebery:

"**MY DEAR ROSEBERY,**—Nobody dislikes more than I do to interfere in matters which not only do not concern me, but which might be looked upon as indiscreet; but as we are such old friends and have so freely talked on so many subjects, especially regarding politics, the probability of a Liberal Government coming into power which has now become a fact, you will, I am sure, forgive my writing to say with what deep concern I have learnt from public rumour that you are disinclined to accept office in Mr. Gladstone's Government. That you may differ with him in many salient points I can easily understand and appreciate; but I, for one, who have my country's interest so deeply at heart, would deeply deplore if you were unwilling to accept the post of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs—a post which you have filled before with such great ability, which has not only been appreciated at home, but by all foreign countries.

"Though I know that the Queen has no desire to press you to accept this post, which for reasons best known to yourself you are disinclined to take, still I know how much she wishes for it; and I for one do most earnestly hope that you will reconsider what I understand is your present decision. . . . Let me, therefore, implore of you to accept office (if Mr. Gladstone will give you a free hand in foreign affairs, and not bind you to agree with him in *all* his home measures) for the Queen's sake and for that of our great Empire!

"Forgive me bothering you, my dear Rosebery; but I should not write so strongly if I did not feel the grave importance of your accepting office in the present serious political crisis. Ever yours very sincerely,

"**ALBERT EDWARD.**"

On August 15th Lord Rosebery answered the letter. He agreed to accept office and he thanked the Prince for "this fresh proof" of his "constant friendship."

Lord Salisbury's Government went to Osborne for its last council—the Prime Minister "could hardly speak" as he gave the

Queen the Foreign Office seal and thanked her for her kindness. Gladstone had already been received, but the audience had not lasted very long. "Mr. Gladstone sat close up to me," wrote the Queen, "as he said he had grown deaf, but that I need not raise my voice, as it was clear. It is rather trying and anxious work to have to take as Prime Minister a man of eighty-two and a half, who really seems no longer quite fitted to be at the head of a Government, and whose views and principles are somewhat dangerous!"

Queen Victoria watched the unfolding of Mr. Gladstone's policy with alarm. She deplored the lowering of Britain's name abroad and she wrote to Lord Rosebery, "The fate of Gordon is not, and will not be forgotten in Europe, and we must take great care in what we do."

Mr. Gladstone bore his eighty-two years with courage. Two weeks after his first audience, while he was at Hawarden, "a wild cow which had escaped into the woods actually rushed at him, throwing him upon his back whilst it stood over him; but he never for a moment lost his presence of mind, and, though having little breath to spare, he managed to get up and sheltered himself behind a tree, when he had the relief of seeing the cow, losing sight of him, walk away."

## *Chapter Forty-six*

1893

The Egyptians made many mistakes under the ægis of the British Government, and early in 1893 their intrigues led them into new mischief. They did not take kindly to the dull, honest policy which had been imported from Whitehall, and in spite of Lord Cromer's firm hold, the palace of Khedive Tewfik was full of whisperings, sly *billets-doux* and plots.

Tewfik, who was apparently egged on by the Sultan, dismissed his Prime Minister in January in favour of a man who was opposed to British influence. The strength of the Queen's character must be insisted upon again at this point, where one finds still another lethargic Cabinet awakened by her reproaches and her persistence. Lord Cromer had asked for reinforcements to remind the Egyptians of the power they were foolishly defying. He had insisted on Tewfik's dismissal of the new Minister and upon an appointment which satisfied him. Thus far the Cabinet concurred, but Mr. Gladstone's pacifist tradition prevented the Government from sending reinforcements to Egypt. It was "inconceivable" the Queen wrote in her Journal, "that a handful of men sitting in a room in London, the greater part knowing little about Egypt, should pretend to say whether there is danger or not!"

Again the Queen's letters forced the Cabinet to action. She wrote to Mr. Gladstone:

"It is surely unjustifiable to leave a British representative ignorant of whether the Government wish to maintain the occupation of Egypt or to suffer their garrison to scuttle or be driven out of it. The moment that necessity arises is the moment too late for action, as must be remembered in the sad and terrible case of Khartoum and cruel fate of Gordon. If troops are now sent to Cairo the necessity will not arise and any danger of war will be averted."

The Queen won, and two days after the above letter reached Mr. Gladstone, he wrote to assure her that the battalion which was to leave Egypt should remain and that a troopship which happened to be on the way home, was to be detained in the Canal.

Two short notes end the story. The Queen wrote to Mr. Gladstone that she could not "sufficiently express her relief and satisfaction at the decision now come to by her Government," and Sir Henry Ponsonby wrote to his mistress, ". . . . this awakening of spirit in the Cabinet is entirely due to your Majesty's pressing remonstrances."

The brilliance which attended the marriages of the Queen's relations into European Courts has faded in the twentieth century. The descriptions of the wedding of the Duke of Edinburgh in St. Petersburg in 1874 seem to belong to the theatre rather than to life when they are read in the light of Soviet Russia to-day. The high hopes which went with the Princess Royal when she married the son of the Crown Prince of Prussia in 1858 seem to end dismally among the woods at Doorn.

In the early years of her reign, ambition and foreign policy may have influenced Queen Victoria in approving wives and husbands for her children. But she soon abandoned this view. She wrote to the Empress Augusta in October of 1870, when Princess Louise was betrothed to the Marquess of Lorne: "I know that such a marriage is at first bound to cause sensation and surprise in Germany, but I myself have been long convinced of its suitability. Great alliances are desirable for certain members of the family, though I attribute little political importance to them, for they can no longer affect the actions of governments, and are only a source of worry and difficulty for the princely family, as my own experience has taught me."

This view of the small value of marriages for diplomatic reasons increased as the Queen grew older, and she was happy, in 1893, when Prince George announced his wish to marry Princess Mary of Teck. The young couple went to her to talk over the arrangements for the wedding. It was a "pleasure to talk to Prince George," the Queen wrote afterwards. He was "so sensible." The betrothal gave fresh impetus to Queen Victoria's wish to live on. She was able to throw herself into the affairs of her grandchildren; both interest and vitality were stimulated, and she complained on her birthday: "My poor old birthday." It was her seventy-fourth, and she added, "I wish now it was instead sixty-fourth."

Buckingham Palace was opened, and in July, both house and gardens were beautiful and lively for Prince George's marriage. The Queen's Journal gives a simple and enchanting picture of the "great day."

" . . . the crowds, the loyalty, and enthusiasm were immense. Telegrams began pouring in from an early hour. Was rolled to our usual dining-room, to see from the window all that was going on. . . . Already, whilst I was still in bed, I heard the distant hum of the people. I breakfasted alone with Beatrice. Began to dress soon after eleven. I wore my wedding lace over a light black stuff, and my wedding veil surmounted by a small coronet. While I was dressing, Mary (herself very handsome) brought in May, who looked very sweet. Her dress was very simple, of white satin with a silver design of roses, shamrocks, thistles and orange flowers, interwoven. On her head she had a small wreath of orange flowers, myrtle, and white heather surmounted by a diamond necklace I gave her, which can also be worn as a diadem, and her mother's wedding veil."

The wedding was to be in the Chapel of St. James's Palace where the Queen herself was married in 1840.

" . . . I was the first to arrive and enter the Chapel, which was not intended, but which I was glad of, as I saw all the processions, which were very striking and dignified. There was a flourish of trumpets, followed by a march played outside, and then taken up by the organ, as the Royalties slowly entered. . . . The Bridegroom's procession followed rapidly, being supported by his father and uncle Affie, all in naval uniform. They had to wait a very short time, when the Bride appeared, followed by her ten dear bridesmaids. . . . I could not but remember that I had stood, where May did, fifty-three years ago, and dear Vicky thirty-five years ago, and that the dear ones, who stood where Georgie did, were gone from us! May these dear children's happiness last longer!"

The Queen returned to Buckingham Palace "before everyone else."

"The heat was very great, quite overwhelming. Went to the middle room, with the balcony, overlooking the Mall, and stepped out amidst much cheering. Very soon the Bride and Bridegroom arrived, and I stepped out on the balcony with them, taking her by the hand, which produced another great outburst of cheering."

When luncheon was over, the Queen went into her own room and when the bride and bridegroom had been photographed, Princess May went to see her, "looking very pretty in her dress of white poplin, edged with gold, and a pretty little toque with roses." When the Princess left her, the Queen was "wheeled over to the middle room looking down the Mall, and found all the family assembled there." Outside, thousands of Londoners were staring at the door through which the bride and bridegroom were to appear. Within, the Queen turned in her rolling chair and "Wished the young couple affectionately good-bye."

1893-1894

Mr. Gladstone devoted the last year of his power as Prime Minister to his old love, the Home Rule Bill for Ireland. At eighty-three, he still dominated the House of Commons. He was still a giant and his voice retained its beauty, but there were other speakers rising at the heels of the veteran, and the Queen noted with pleasure that they made fierce attacks upon the "impracticable measure." On February 13th she was delighted because the Bill was "pulled quite to pieces" in a splendid speech by Mr. Balfour. After two years of silence, Lord Randolph Churchill rose to support Mr. Balfour's arguments. The Queen noted also that Mr. Chamberlain made a "splendid speech" when the Bill was read the first time. But she wrote that it was "sad to think" that it was to be read once more. She ended the entry for the day in her Journal, "Please God, in committee it will be much altered. But I am much disturbed about this. . . ."

Almost five months afterwards the Queen wrote, still haunted by the endless debates, "The House of Commons seems to be going from bad to worse, nothing but wrangling and quarrelling. . . ." Two more months were to pass: many days were squandered and

many tempers lost before the fearful second of September when Mr. Gladstone's Bill was carried in the Commons by a majority of thirty-four. Seven days afterwards it was rejected in the House of Lords by a majority of three hundred and sixty-eight. What was most "remarkable" to the Queen on this fortunate day was that the crowd of Londoners waiting outside the House of Lords "cheered very much" when the news of the crushing majority filtered out to them. They cheered again when Lord Salisbury appeared. Mr. Gladstone retired into the background, but he still held the control of the Commons in his hands and it was not until March of the new year that the undermining of the leader's power brought about his final fall. There was something magnificent about the deaf, half-blind father of Liberalism living through the failure of the Bill to which he had devoted the last energies of his life. But there was no phrase in the Queen's letters to show that she appreciated the picture of an old enemy, his senses failing, still stumbling on into battle. On March 2nd, 1894, Mr. Gladstone stood up to speak in the House of Commons for the last time. His last words were a protest against the Lords for their treatment of the Commons. He was so deaf that he could not hear any voice that spoke against him: so blind that he saw both friends and enemies through a mist. His senses had closed in on him and his fierce life in the Commons was ended.

Three days before, Mr. Gladstone had sent for Sir Henry Ponsonby. "It was about nothing more nor less than his resignation. . . . He is growing blind," wrote the Queen, "and is already very deaf, so that his decision is not to be wondered at." The "secret" was already the talk of London, but nobody dared to talk of it to the Queen at dinner at night, nobody, "except Bertie."

Mr. Gladstone went down to Windsor on March 3rd with his resignation. He was obliged to sit very close as the Queen listened to him. There was no show of tenderness for the veteran: no relaxation from the old rigidity and coldness. The Queen's Journal shows no sympathy for the old man's plight, only the cold fact that "he would take an early opportunity of retiring from Parliament. He then kissed my hand and left."

When Mr. Gladstone had gone, the Queen went to her desk and, without consulting Minister or friend, she wrote to Lord Rosebery,

"urging him to accept the Premiership, if even only for a short time, for the good of the country." Lord Rosebery did not wish to be Prime Minister but he sent his acceptance to the Queen. One fear haunted him as he wrote the letter. He told the Queen that he set "the greatest value on the character of his relations" with her. "Anything that changed it would cause him deep pain." The Queen's "constant goodness to him," more especially at the time of his wife's death, had "inspired him with the deepest feelings of loyal gratitude and affection" and he was afraid lest, at a time when he might pursue a policy to which his honour bound him, he might find himself in "acute conflict" with his Queen.

Queen Victoria soothed him. She thought it hardly possible, "or at any rate probable," that there would be trouble which might alienate him from her. In her letter the Queen wrote:

"She does not object to Liberal measures which are not revolutionary, and she does not think it possible that Lord Rosebery will destroy well-tried, valued, and necessary institutions for the sole purpose of flattering useless Radicals or pandering to the pride of those whose only desire is their own self-gratification."

Mr. Gladstone withdrew from the long, chilly association with his Queen. There was no kindly scene and even the Queen's letter of farewell seemed to be wrung from her unwillingly. She thought he was right in wishing to retire, "after so many years of arduous labour and responsibility. . . ." She trusted that he would "enjoy peace and quiet, with his excellent and devoted wife in health and happiness," and that his eyesight might improve.

Early on the morning of March 3rd, before her husband's visit, Mrs. Gladstone had travelled down to Windsor to plead with the Queen. Few more pathetic interviews are recorded in the Queen's Journal. Mrs. Gladstone sought the Queen early, after breakfast. She was "very much upset, poor thing." She asked to be allowed to speak because her husband "could not speak." Mrs. Gladstone talked through tears. She knew the grim battles of Gladstone's life: she knew what the weight of his Sovereign's persistent frustration and dislike meant to him. She pleaded with the Queen to believe that "whatever his errors might have been," Gladstone's "devotion" to the Queen and the Crown "were very great."

The Queen recorded the unhappy scene. "She repeated this twice, and begged me to allow her to tell him that I believed it, which I did; for I am convinced it is the case, though at times his actions might have made it difficult to believe. . . . I kissed her when she left."

The Prince of Wales was less censorious. When Mr. Gladstone resigned in 1894, there had been an exchange of gracious letters and the Prince had expressed his hope that Gladstone would count him as one of his "many friends and admirers." He said that both the Princess and himself had valued the friendship of the Prime Minister and Mrs. Gladstone for many years. When Gladstone died, the Prince acted as a pall-bearer and, when the coffin had been lowered into the grave in the Abbey, he crossed to the place where Mrs. Gladstone was seated and, after speaking a few sympathetic words, he kissed her hand. The Princely gesture set the seal upon a friendship which had endured for half a century.

The Queen received Gladstone once, at Cimiez, before his death. Even then, when he was no longer a danger to her peace of mind, when he was old and blind and tired, she held back and gave no sign of friendly pity or forgiveness. A year afterwards, when Mr. Gladstone died at Hawarden, the Queen turned to one of her ladies, regretting the necessity of writing a letter of sympathy to Mrs. Gladstone. "How can I say that I am sorry when I am not?" she said.

1894

There were times when Queen Victoria might have regretted her independent appointment of Lord Rosebery as Prime Minister. Long association with the Court had bound the Primrose family to the Queen, but the young peer had radical notions of his own about the rights of the aristocracy and the sanctity of the House of Lords. Her personal faith in Lord Rosebery had been shaken several times since he became her first Minister and in March she sent him a scolding letter, from the Villa Fabbricotti where she was staying. The attacks upon the House of Lords had been renewed and Lord Rosebery had been guilty of supporting the reformers, although his language had been "in a much less strong degree" than most. The Queen wrote:

"The House of Lords might possibly be improved, but it is part and parcel of the much vaunted and admired British Constitution, and CANNOT be abolished. . . . It has, and with truth, often been said that there are Peers whose personal character render them unfit to remain in the House of Lords. But who is to be the judge of this? And if one comes to that, are there not quite as many very bad characters and very many disloyal ones, of whom the House of Commons would be much the better to be rid?"

Lord Rosebery replied with the old argument against the Lords: that they were a Conservative body, accepting the legislation of a Conservative Government "without question or dispute." But when a Liberal Government was in power, the Second Chamber ceased to be "harmless." It became active and it exercised its powers to oppose the legislation of a Government with which it had little sympathy.

Rosebery declared his deepest wish to the Queen. If the Ministry fell, he hoped to "extricate himself from politics for ever." But while he remained in power, he continued his campaign against the Lords and in June the Queen spoke "very openly" to him about his speeches "*out of Parliament*." They should take "a more serious tone and be . . . less jocular, which is hardly befitting a Prime

Minister." She added, "Lord Rosebery is so clever that he may be carried away by a sense of humour, which is a little dangerous."

It was a sense of conviction rather than a sense of humour which drove Rosebery on in his campaign against lazy and ineffectual members of his own class, and in October he reached the zenith of indignation in a speech at Bradford. Two days before this the Queen had been so distressed by his threat to lay his policy before the country that she had strained her constitutional vows by appealing to Lord Salisbury for help. She declared the proposed action to be "mischievous in the highest degree . . . and disloyal." The Queen appealed next to the Prince of Wales. Perhaps through his friendship with the charming Prime Minister who unfortunately had such radical tendencies—perhaps he might curb him! "Can you not convey your feeling on this dangerous policy to him? I think he behaved very ill to me." The Prince shared his mother's anxiety. But this time he offered her little help. "Fear anything I write or say will avail nothing," he telegraphed, in reply.

Lord Rosebery's violent language in his speech at Bradford brought the last, agitated reproofs down upon him. The Queen accused him of ignoring the opinion of his Sovereign and she plucked phrases from his address to support her protests. Lord Rosebery was not intimidated, but he accompanied firmness of will with gracious assurances of his loyalty. "If by any conceivable means he could relieve your Majesty he would gladly do so," he wrote. But he had inherited a weight of promises from Mr. Gladstone's regime and he was obliged to go on. He wrote, "Did he believe that his resignation of office would assist your Majesty, he would ask your Majesty's permission to retire to-morrow."

The Queen revealed a liberal and patient frame of mind in her innumerable letters. In answer to one of Lord Rosebery's communications, she wrote:

"He is mistaken . . . in thinking that '*any dealing with the H. of L.*' is *distasteful* to her. The Queen fully recognises the necessity for its reform . . . the Queen would ask Lord Rosebery and his Cabinet to bear in mind that fifty-seven years ago the Constitution was delivered into her keeping, and that, right or wrong, she has her views as to the fulfilment of that trust. . . ."

Lord Rosebery pursued his dream of a refreshed and reformed House of Lords and the Queen clung to the obligations of her Constitution. But the tussle did not evoke severish interest outside the Court and the Cabinet. The change of Government in the new year brought an end to the agitation. The anxiety of the Queen, her Government and her people was drawn into a wider arena in 1895 through unsettlement in Africa, America, India and Germany and the old ghost of Lords reform was allowed to rest.

1894-1895

When Lord Rosebery became Prime Minister after Mr. Gladstone's retirement, he described his seat as "the most uneasy throne in Europe since that of Poland." Many circumstances contributed to his discomfort. His rival, Sir William Harcourt, was Leader of the House of Commons, and it was not long before Prime Minister and Leader disliked each other so violently that they never spoke and seldom corresponded. Lord Rosebery sometimes poured out his woes to the Queen, and although she sympathised, she begged him to act "as a check and a drag upon his Cabinet." But Rosebery's position became more and more ridiculous. Sir William Harcourt's bitter hostility to him and the narrow majority by which the Government's Bills were passed, only to be rejected by the Lords, created a state which tied his hands so that "for all practical purposes," he wrote to the Queen, he might as well be "in the Tower of London."

The end came in June. The Queen was on a train, travelling south from Balmoral. She took out her Journal to record the extraordinary circumstances. "Heard with astonishment by telegraph, which I got at Carlisle, that . . . the Government had been defeated." The crisis had followed the announcement in the House of the retirement of the Duke of Cambridge from the office of Commander-in-Chief, a reform and change which is described in detail in the letters of the Queen for 1894. A few hours after the announcement had been made the Government had been defeated by seven votes, "on a charge of keeping an insufficient reserve of cordite ammunition."

Lord Rosebery's Government resigned and the Queen sent for Lord Salisbury again. For almost sixty years she had been summoning

new Ministers and saying good-bye to old ones. But this was to be the last occasion upon which a Prime Minister went to Windsor to kiss her hand and accept the seals of office. Lord Rosebery withdrew, to his "immense relief," after his short, harassing season of power. There was a Disraelian touch about the manner of his going. He had been an unruly Prime Minister, but there was gallantry in his letter of farewell:

. . . I would ask leave with humble duty to write a word that I could not speak.

*I can say with absolute truth that my only regret in laying down my office is the cessation of my personal relations with your Majesty. May I then, once for all, and from the bottom of my heart, thank your Majesty for your abundant and gracious kindness to me? Whether in public or private life I shall always remember it with the deepest gratitude and pray for the continuance of your Majesty's health and glorious reign.*

The Queen opened her heart to this pledge of Rosebery's devotion. She sent him an answer, beginning, "Dear Lord Rosebery," and at the end she wrote, "I wish to offer you a little souvenir, which I hope will recall me to your memory, and that you will not forget me." The souvenir was an "exquisite statuette."

1895-1896

If the achievement at the close of Queen Victoria's reign is to be appreciated, the number of her years and her increasing physical infirmities must be recalled. At an age when widows were inclined to take to their sofas, she ruled an Empire, wrestling with the changes of government, the wave of troubles which swept over the world in the 'nineties and, in the end, the tragedy of the South African War. She contributed force and decision to every cause and, in the last five years of her life, lame, tired and barely able to read, she almost guided the world. Those who refused her guidance were at least intimidated by her will.

The Queen was seventy-seven years old. On January 2nd of the new year she wrote in her Journal, "Beatrice read me telegrams after tea, as my sight is so bad, and I have not yet succeeded in getting spectacles to suit." Five days afterwards she complained again, "So

much to do, and my troublesome eyes make everything much more difficult."

The years had not been tranquil. There had been war between China and Japan and in the repercussions there had been a new strain in the relationship between Britain and Russia. French and German ambitions in Africa added another problem to the weight upon her and the sins of Abdul Hamid aroused her in defence of the massacred Armenians. There had been the passing of Rosebery's Government and the establishment of Salisbury's solid Coalition to increase her burdens. Almost as soon as Lord Salisbury assumed office there had been friction with America over the boundary between the South American Republic of Venezuela and British Guiana. A bombardment of letters and dispatches had followed and feeling in America had become so wild that President Cleveland had appealed to the national emotions of his people. The result had been panic and collapse in Wall Street. The whole world seemed to be shaking with changes. In South Africa, Kruger was astir. He had celebrated the Emperor William's birthday by pleading for deeper friendship between Germany and the Transvaal.

Here were mighty burdens for a woman of seventy-seven to shoulder. She had made a significant gesture in February of 1894, when she gave final proof of her devotion and trust in her heir, after his long apprenticeship. She proposed that while she was abroad on holiday he should be appointed Guardian of the Realm. The project was abandoned for political reasons, on the advice of the Cabinet. But the spontaneous suggestion had come from the Queen, and it provides an important and welcome fact in the long and often agitated relationship between mother and son.

1896

When Lord Salisbury formed his Coalition Government in July, 1895, he had the support of a stalwart company of representative politicians. He undertook the duties of Foreign Secretary in addition to those of Prime Minister. The Duke of Devonshire, leader of the Liberal Unionists, became President of the Council, Mr. Balfour the First Lord of the Treasury, and Mr. Chamberlain, the typical Radical Imperialist, controlled the Colonial Office.

The notorious Jameson Raid was the first startling episode in

this, the last stage of the Queen's reign. Dr. Jameson, who was Administrator of the British South Africa Company's territory, invaded the Transvaal with about five hundred followers, to support the Uitlanders who were oppressed by Kruger and denied franchise and other civil rights. Jameson's romantic but hopeless gesture ended in his own destruction. He went on, in spite of British intervention, and, after hours of disastrous fighting at Krugersdorp, he surrendered. An adventure in arms loses its brave colours when it is translated from African sunshine to the grey light of London. The news of Jameson's invasion and surrender caused panic in Westminster and at Windsor.

The incident which matters in this story is the sending of the famous telegram of congratulation to Kruger by the German Emperor who had taken the chair at a conference in the Foreign Office in Berlin, after news of the raid reached Europe. He proposed measures so drastic that his Chancellor said, ". . . that would mean war with England." The Emperor answered, "Yes, but only on land." Then had followed the drafting of the fatal telegram to Kruger.

The *Morning Post* announced the train of thought which was to run through British policy for the next eighteen years. "The nation will never forget this telegram and it will always bear it in mind in the future orientation of its policy." The old, wise hand of the Queen was raised. The Prince of Wales wished his mother to give the Emperor "a good snubbing." Her answer came back:

"Dearest Bertie,—It would not do to have given him 'a good snub.' Those sharp, cutting answers and remarks only irritate and do harm, and in Sovereigns and Princes should be most carefully guarded against. William's faults come from impetuosity (as well as conceit); and calmness and firmness are the most powerful weapons in such cases. Lord Salisbury's great strength is his great calmness and energy, both of which Mr. Chamberlain possesses. . . ."

## *Chapter Forty-eight*

1896-1897

The Queen was consoled for the troubles in Africa and India by the calm administration at home. Her thankfulness overflowed in March when she wrote to Lord Salisbury: "Every day I feel the blessing of a strong Government in such safe and strong hands as yours." The plots of Kruger and the duplicity of her grandson at Potsdam were less alarming when she was surrounded by statesmen who were willing to sink their party differences in the service of the country. Mr. Chamberlain had been very "firm and sensible" over the Jameson Raid, and when Mr. Balfour came to see the Queen in September she wrote in her Journal: "I am struck, as is every one, by Mr. Balfour's extreme fairness, impartiality, and large-mindedness. He sees all sides of a question, is wonderfully generous in his feelings towards others, and very gentle and sweet-tempered." The debates at Westminster were not lit by the brilliance of the 'seventies and Lord Salisbury's chivalry was of a sterner kind than that of Lord Beaconsfield, but the calm, restrained character of her Cabinet was in tune with the closing years of the Queen's reign.

Queen Victoria's domestic circle had been bereaved many times in recent years. In January, Prince Henry of Battenberg had died at sea, on his way home from the Ashanti expedition. The shadows of mourning hung over almost every month of the last five years of the Queen's life: both the exalted and the humble fell away from the company of her friends. Her secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, was dead; "good old Mrs. Symon," who kept the shop at Balmoral, and many of the Queen's servants died of old age in the 'nineties. The nearness of death only increased her wish to live on. There were no phrases of pious sadness in her Journal. She sat at her writing-table, her eyes fortified with belladonna, "guiding the land, the nation, the world almost, with her venerable influence."

The manifestations of life excited the Queen too much for mournful pondering over death, and she found increasing pleasure in the concerns of her grandchildren. She wrote of Prince George and Princess Mary, "Every time I see them I love them more and

respect them greatly. Thank God! Georgie has got such an excellent, useful, and good wife!"

There was little that was sentimental about the ageing figure of the Queen. She enjoyed the signs of her power: she rose with splendour to receive the trophies which Kitchener brought back from Dongola: a Sudanese drum, a Crusader sword and the flag from the tower, which she added to her collection of soldiers' plunder at Windsor.

Kitchener sat next to the Queen at dinner one evening and he told her the story of Dongola. Perhaps in a year or two he would go back and lead her soldiers as far as Khartoum and "wipe out the stain on England's character." It was part of her fine sense of justice and her capacity for indignation that the Queen never forgave Gladstone or forgot Gordon's death. When dinner was over and when the Queen went to her sitting-room, she wrote her impressions of the "striking, energetic-looking soldier." He had "rather a firm expression," but he was "very pleasing to talk to."

The great century was ending. Every decade in her reign had brought its changes and the last mechanical surprise was the telephone. The Queen was able to speak with Lord Salisbury from Windsor to London. The new-fangled motor-cars were already startling timorous villagers in remote places, and on November 23rd, the Queen had sat in the Red Drawing-room at Windsor to see the "so-called *animated pictures*" which had been taken by Mr. Downey when the Czar was at Balmoral. It was ". . . a wonderful process, representing people, their movements and actions, as if they were alive."

The Queen was at Windsor in June of 1897. On the 20th she wrote in her Journal: "This eventful day, 1897, has opened, and I pray God to help and protect me as He has hitherto done during these sixty long eventful years. . . . God will surely help me on! How well I remember this day sixty years ago, when I was called from my bed by dear Mama to receive the news of my accession!"

The sixtieth anniversary of the Queen's accession fell upon a Sunday and the morning service in St. George's Chapel was perhaps the most solemn and inspiring occasion in the week of celebrations. The Queen sat facing the altar at which her son had been married in 1862. She wrote: "I was much touched and overcome, especially

when all my children and grandchildren came up to me and I kissed them, just as I did ten years ago at Westminster Abbey." In the afternoon, the Queen went to St. George's once more, to listen to Mendelssohn's *Hymn of Praise*. "Mme. Albani came down on purpose to sing in it."

The Queen drove back to her rooms in the castle, feeling "rather nervous about the coming days." On Monday morning she travelled to Paddington by train. The doorway of her carriage had been widened to admit the wheeled chair in which she sat. When the Queen arrived at Buckingham Palace, she rested for a little while and then she was taken in her chair to the Bow Room, where all her family waited for her. She received all the foreign Princes in succession. (Among them was the Archduke Franz Ferdinand who was shot at Serajevo in 1914.) The Queen wrote in her Journal: "I got back to my room a little before four, quite exhausted. Telegrams kept pouring in. It was quite impossible even to open them. . . . Dressed for dinner. I wore a dress of which the whole front was embroidered in gold, which had been specially worked in India, diamonds in my cap, and a diamond necklace, etc. The dinner was in the Supper-room, at little tables of twelve each. . . . I sat between the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the Prince of Naples. After dinner went into Ballroom, where my private band played and the following were presented to me: the Colonial Premiers with their wives, the Special Envoys, the three Indian Princes, and all the officers of the two Indian escorts, who, as usual, held out their swords to be touched by me. . . . It was only a little after eleven when I got back to my room, feeling very tired. There was a deal of noise in the streets, and we were told that many were sleeping out in the parks."

June 22nd was the "never-to-be-forgotten day." The night before had been very hot, and the Queen was "rather restless." "There was such a noise going on the whole time," but it did not keep her "from getting some sleep." On the morning of the tremendous procession through the streets of London, she wore "a dress of black silk, trimmed with panels of grey satin veiled with black net and steel embroideries, and some black lace." Her bonnet was trimmed "with creamy white flowers and white aigrette and some black lace." Before she drove away from Buckingham

Palace she touched an electric button which sent her message of thanks "throughout the whole Empire." The sun burst out as the carriage rolled out of the courtyard into a scene which London had never known before. Soldiers had come from all the Queen's dominions to escort her upon the six-mile drive to St. Paul's, by the north side of the river and home again along the south bank. The millions of people pressed into the streets of the route and sang as she passed. There was no question of their loyalty now. Their glory, their riches, their pride and their safety were symbolised in the little old figure who had ruled the land since the days of their grandfathers. Few remembered a time when she was not their Queen. In front of St. Paul's Cathedral the carriage stopped. The Archbishop and the Bishops were waiting for her, their gorgeous copes radiant against the smoke-darkened stone. A *Te Deum* was sung in the open air. There was a prayer and a benediction and then the procession moved on, across London Bridge, to the dimmer streets of the poor. Here too the houses blossomed and the singing went on. It seemed that London was a choir, six miles long, chanting the glory of her name and the venerable story of her reign. The Queen was very tired when she returned to the Palace. She wrote: "No one ever, I believe, has met with such an ovation as was given to me, passing through those six miles of streets. . . . The cheering was quite deafening, and every face seemed to be filled with real joy. I was much moved and gratified."

1897-1899

In the two years following the celebration of her Diamond Jubilee, Queen Victoria enjoyed influence over a wider sphere than any ruler in history. It was not only in Britain and the dominions that her name inspired awe and reverence. The civilised world had been deeply stirred by the events of the Jubilee and in America, France, Germany, Spain and Austria, the Queen's great age and her mellowed character endowed her with something of the power of an oracle. Perhaps the power was more personal than that of an oracle, for she seemed to come nearer to the every-day interests and common tasks than when she was young. In a sense, she was the mother of her century. Wherever she went she was acclaimed. The Queen Regent of Spain appealed to her for

guidance and the Queen of Holland deferred to her judgment. Hers was the only hand that could stay the onrush of her grandson in Germany. When the President of the French Republic waited upon her at Cimiez ("so *grand seigneur* and not at all *parvenu*"), he avoided politics and graciously told her that she was *aimée par la population*. During the same holiday she went to a parade of the troops of the garrison. The Governor asked that the salute should not be for him but for the little stooping figure in the carriage. The influence of the Queen's visits to France was such that the British Ambassador in Paris informed Lord Salisbury that "whatever may be the condition of the official relations between the two Governments, the veneration and respect entertained by Frenchmen towards the Queen of England are never affected or prejudiced thereby." This power was purely personal. The Queen was so old that the romance of history seemed to touch her. The other giants of the century were dead (Bismarck and Gladstone both died in 1898), and the Queen was almost isolated, surrounded by a younger generation of monarchs and statesmen. "All fall around me," she wrote, "I become more and more lonely."

The Queen's personal power in Britain was amazing during the last years of her reign. It was to her that the three hundred and thirty-six thousand Protestant women appealed for the public control of convents. It was her letter to the Duke of Norfolk that elicited the reassuring report on Catholic Institutions. When the Queen wished to soften the anger of the London newspapers against Germany, Sir Theodore Martin went to the editors of nine London daily journals, in her name, to ask them to "adopt a quite altered tone" towards the German Emperor and the German people. All agreed (including *The Times*) to follow her wish. Even the editor of *Punch* was willing to censor the humour of his caricaturists. This proof of the Queen's power in Fleet Street is remarkable to any student of newspaper history, for neither *The Times* nor *Punch* had been afraid to discuss her domestic life with brutal candour in the early days of her reign.

In September of 1898 one of the Queen's deepest ambitions was realised. On the fifth, Kitchener telegraphed to his Sovereign from Nastri: "This morning the British and Egyptian flags were hoisted on the walls of Gordon's Palace at Khartoum." He had led her

soldiers through the thrilling battle of Omdurman and the dervish army had been almost destroyed. When the troops reached Khartoum, they cheered *her* name and they prayed for *her*, during the memorial service upon the ground where Gordon had been killed. She was grimly pleased by the victory and there was no sentimentality in her comment, "Surely he is avenged."

On her eightieth birthday the Queen was at Windsor. The wish to live was stronger than ever. There had been a nosegay from Princess Beatrice, silver candelabra for the Durbar room at Osborne, and a miniature of Prince Charles Edward from Lord Rosebery. Choristers serenaded her as she ate her breakfast. All day, tributes poured into the Castle: almost three thousand telegrams, a bouquet in the shape of a harp from the Madrigal Society of Eton and Windsor, eighty roses from the Officers of the Scots Guards, and flowers from her daughter in Germany. After luncheon, "Georgie and May came with their two little boys," who gave her a bouquet. The Queen, who had been among the first of her generation to applaud Wagner's music, selected three acts of *Lohengrin* for the evening celebration of her birthday. She was "simply enchanted." She wrote in her Journal: "It is the most glorious composition, so poetic, so dramatic, and one might almost say, religious in feeling and full of sadness, pathos, and tenderness. . . . The whole opera produced a great impression on me."

The months of 1899 passed by in success, honour and celebration. When Mr. Balfour travelled down to Osborne to see the Queen in August, he said that the last session of Parliament had been "the most successful and the quietest he ever remembered. . . ." Everything was "most satisfactory excepting the Transvaal." This was the one shadow over the year. The first sign of disaster had come in May when the 21,684 Uitlanders of the Transvaal sent a petition to the Queen. Her secretary reported the contents of the desperate appeal of her people, twenty times more numerous than the Boers, yet having no voice in the government of the rich mining country. He wrote: "Promises made after the Jameson Raid have never been fulfilled; there is no liberty of the Press; British subjects can be expelled at the will of the President; the Uitlanders . . . are overtaxed. . . . They are not allowed to meet together, or even to present petitions;

the police are entirely composed of Boers, and behave in the most arbitrary and indeed oppressive manner, and are responsible for the murder of one British subject . . .”

The imagination and industry of the British had brought prosperity to the Transvaal, especially through the development of the gold mines. Yet the Boers placed the heaviest burden of taxation upon them, with none of the privileges of citizenship. Kruger's relentless policy, the breaking of the promises which he had made after Majuba, and the failure of Sir Alfred Milner's conference with the Boer leader brought about a disastrous state of affairs in the summer of 1899, and it was obvious that the only solution of the Transvaal problem lay in battle.

Germany and France rang with recriminations while Britain was preparing for the war in South Africa. Ten thousand soldiers from India and the Mediterranean poured into Natal; farmers and citizens in Australia, Canada and New Zealand turned from their peaceful occupations to offer their allegiance and service. On October 4th Lord Wolseley announced the extent of his preparations to the Queen. There would be “70,000 men of Your Majesty's Army, the largest number ever sent from the United Kingdom for any war.”

Kruger, dour and mighty, had dominated the policy of the Transvaal for many years, through vicissitudes which had hardened his heart and narrowed his vision. He waited until October of 1899, when British troops were pouring into the country, before he flung down the gauntlet. His ultimatum was sent to the British Government on October 9th. The terms were refused and, two days afterwards, the two years and seven months of the South African War began.

Queen Victoria was at Balmoral. Sir Redvers Buller had travelled north to see her on October 5th, and he had told her that he did not think that “there would be much hard fighting.” The soldier's optimistic prophecy, told to her in his “blunt, straight-forward way,” was not wholly reassuring to the Queen. She rose in the last grand tragedy of her reign, to give her armies the encouragement and compassion they needed. The moral issues which were to be dissected by historians in later years did not disturb her: nor the indignation of Germany and France. The strain and anxiety seemed

to restore her energies rather than to weaken them. She encouraged her Ministers and she pored over maps with her Generals. She left the quiet gardens of Balmoral to drive over, through Ballater, to the barracks. Her guard of Gordon Highlanders was drawn up, ready to join the rest of the regiment and sail for South Africa. She was so blind that she could not see them, but she spoke. "May God protect you! I am confident that you will always do your duty, and will ever maintain the high reputation of the Gordon Highlanders." They cheered her and she drove away with "a lump in her throat." But there was no time for emotional indulgence. News came to Balmoral from the four corners of the earth, and it was not encouraging. Each day had its problem. Sir George White was shut up in Ladysmith with his Indian forces and other troops were besieged in Kimberley and Mafeking. There was a further moment of anxiety when the Canadian Government held back from making pledges. The apathy soon passed, for the emotions of the people swept the politicians aside and the Canadian contingent left Quebec on October 30th. The Governor wrote to the Queen of the four hundred soldiers who knelt in the Cathedral in Quebec, to take the Sacrament before they sailed. The Governor of New Zealand also wrote to her of the "magic spell" which her name had cast over the people. Colonial troopships hurried across the two oceans, towards Africa.

Early in November the Queen drove down to the barracks at Windsor to inspect the troops before they departed. She noted their new khaki uniforms, much less picturesque than the uniforms worn by her soldiers when she sped them on their way to the Crimea, but much more "practical." When the troops were asked to give her three cheers, "they gave many more and would hardly stop." On November 29th, she went to the barracks again to inspect the battalion of Grenadiers, "drawn up without arms." She drove down the line, unable to leave her carriage because of her lameness. Then the wives were brought up for her to see. One, with a baby in her arms, held back because her husband had sailed only that morning. She did not feel that she had yet earned the right to come near to the carriage. But she was pressed forward and, with the others who were close, she saw that there were tears in the Queen's eyes.

In November, while the forces were still besieged in Kimberley, Mafeking and Ladysmith, Lord Methuen triumphed in three engagements, at Belmont, Enslin and Modder River. The good news of Modder River had barely reached England when the failure of a night attack on Stormberg plunged the country into gloom again. The "black week" had begun.

General Gatacre's failure at Stormberg was followed by Lord Methuen's losses at Magersfontein and, on December 15th, Sir Redvers Buller was attacked and repulsed while attempting to cross the Tugela, on the way to relieve Ladysmith. The succession of alarming telegrams reached the Queen at Windsor: one when she was in the room where Queen Anne had received the news of Blenheim. Sir Redvers Buller faltered in the face of defeat and he telegraphed suggesting that he should "let Ladysmith go." Some dared to talk of a truce or even of defeat. The fountain of courage was at Windsor. Forty-five of the Queen's eighty years seemed to fall away from her. She was on the balcony of Buckingham Palace again with Prince Albert beside her, waving her handkerchief as the soldiers passed on their way to the Levant. When Lord Salisbury went down to Windsor he found an old woman sitting in her chair. The Queen's eyes were so dim that their weakness was apparent as he looked into them. The wrinkled hands upon the arms of the chair were old, but they moved energetically when there was any suggestion of failure. "All will come right," she said, again and again. When she was alone, her hands were seldom still. Woollen comforters and caps grew beneath her busy needles and there was a note of indignation in her voice when she learned that they were given to the officers and not to the men. She thought and felt with the mass of her people. One of her first messages to Lord Salisbury at the beginning of the war had been, "I sincerely hope that the increased taxation . . . will not fall upon the working classes . . ."

When Mr. Balfour went to the Queen in December, she was angry as she interrupted his gloomy references to defeat. "Please understand that there is no one depressed in *this house*," she said, "we are not interested in the possibilities of defeat; they do not exist." Never once did she waver in this last courageous proof of her greatness. Mr. Balfour went back to London after the proud

reprimand and he said that it had been *splendid* to pass from "the clamorous croakers in clubs and newspapers into the presence of this little old lady, alone among her women at Windsor, and hear her sweep all their vaticinations into nothingness with a nod."

The Prince of Wales had celebrated his fifty-eighth birthday in November of 1899. On the eve of his accession he was a mature man, almost past middle-age and endowed with the honoured name of "grandfather." The changes of the eighteenth century had demanded that a new kind of sovereign should rise from the ashes of kingship: a sovereign who lived close to his people. The Prince of Wales had thrown himself into the maelstrom of Britain's daily life, associating himself with philanthropy, education, health reforms, social welfare, fashion, society and harmless amusement. No other Prince ever approached the throne with such a full knowledge of and sympathy for the anxieties and frailties of his people. In this lay the secret of the Prince's popularity. Sir Sidney Lee quotes in his honour the happy phrase: "he saw life steadily and saw it whole."

The Prince clung tenaciously to the dignity and rights of his position, but he was always fascinated by men who did not lie down obediently under the Royal heel. He had learned this lesson through his friendships with Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Chamberlain, in the early phase of his radicalism. The mixed company at Marlborough House and the cosmopolitan contacts had taught him to speak in a language which the people understood. He was to rule in a different century and he was to draw his advisers from a wider field. There were to be no more Melbournes or Derbys or Salisburys to guide the land. The age of the great aristocrats was over and a new kind of blood was coming into Westminster. James Ramsay MacDonald was elected secretary of the Labour Party in 1900. James Henry Thomas was a young engine driver, twenty-five years old, dreaming his dreams as he travelled over the lines of the Great Western Railway. David Lloyd George had represented Carnarvon in the Commons for ten years and Philip Snowden had retired from the Civil Service to enter politics. These were to be among the statesmen of the new century.

During the South African War the Prince came nearer and nearer to the responsibilities which were awaiting him. His organisation of war philanthropy and his personal service to the wounded took

him into new spheres of activity: his letters to and from the soldiers in Africa widened his knowledge and deepened his sympathies. One of his correspondents was Mr. Winston Churchill, who sent him colourful descriptions of his capture by the Boers, his imprisonment and his escape.

If the South African War drew the Prince nearer to the anxieties of the British people, it also fed the bitterness between himself and his nephew in Germany. The Emperor's letters, written to his grandmother and to his uncle during the months of the war, were fantastic. He poured his emotional advice upon them at almost every turn of the fortunes of the armies. In March, 1900, he wrote to the Queen, telling her that he could not intervene in the interests of peace. Her answer silenced him for a little time. She wrote, through the British Ambassador in Berlin, to tell the Emperor that "my whole nation is with me in a fixed determination to see this war through without intervention. The time for, and the terms of, peace must be left to our decision, and my country . . . will resist all interference."

The Prince did not find it so easy to snub his nephew. In January, Dr. Leyds, Secretary of State for the Transvaal Government, was in Berlin and he was invited to a dinner in celebration of the Emperor's birthday. Sir Frank Lascelles, the British Ambassador, was obliged to be among the guests and to shake hands with Leyds. This last affront was too much for the Prince of Wales. He hoped, he said, that Sir Frank "washed his hands with carbolic soap after having shaken hands with the Boer representative." His letter to his nephew was phrased more cautiously. "We, however, feel confident that in the end the result will be successful, though that opinion is not shared on the Continent or by Dr. Leyds, who, I perceive, has been received with open arms by all classes of Society in Berlin!"

The evil genius which guided the Emperor's policy led to his deepest perfidy in January of 1900. In the midst of his letter writing to Queen Victoria, for whom he professed his admiration and love in grandiose terms, he went to the Russian Ambassador in Berlin and proposed that this was the time, while Britain was harassed by the South African War, for the Powers of Europe to combine in an attack upon his grandmother's country. If France or Russia had been inclined to listen to the tempter, their hopes

would have been weakened by the swift change which came to the fortunes of Britain's arms early in the new year. Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener had assumed control at the Cape on January 10th, and under their command the tide turned. The misfortunes of the "black week" were slowly overcome and on February 15th, General French, commanding horse artillery, cavalry and mounted infantry, dispersed the enemy and entered Kimberley. The good news was hurried to the Isle of Wight in time to greet the Queen at breakfast.

One pretty scene intervened between the relief of Kimberley and the next encouraging news from the war area. On February 19th, the Queen wrote in her Journal:

"Out with Beatrice, before which I had seen the little bugler, James Dunn of the Dublin Fusiliers, only 14 years of age, who was wounded in the arm and chest at Colenso. He swam the Tugela, and was then helped back to camp by a soldier and a sailor. He lost his bugle on the battlefield, so I gave him another with an inscription. . . . He is a nice-looking modest boy."

Eight days afterwards, the second series of welcome telegrams reached the Queen at Windsor. Lord Roberts informed her from Army Headquarters, "General Cronje and his whole force capitulated at daybreak this morning, unconditionally. He is now a prisoner in my camp." The second triumph came on the anniversary of Majuba Hill. On February 28th, Queen Victoria was able to record in her Journal: "Before I got up Lizzie Stewart, my wardrobe maid, came in saying the telegraph boy had just come in with a telegram he was anxious I should have at once." It was from Sir Redvers Buller, announcing the entry into Ladysmith. The Queen's "joy was unbounded." She let "everybody in the Castle know, and telegraphed to her relations." In the afternoon she held an Investiture. Prince George stood by her and helped her to put on the decorations. She used *his* sword upon the shoulders of the knights, when they knelt before her.

1900

The tide had finally turned with the surrender of General Cronje and the relief of Kimberley and Ladysmith. The Boers were disheartened, but they made a bold endeavour at compromise by

telegraphing to Lord Salisbury that they were willing to make peace if the "incontestable independence of both republics" was assured. They went further and petitioned the European Powers to intervene on their behalf. But Britain's heart was hardened. There were the families of fourteen thousand dead officers and men of the United Kingdom and Ireland to stimulate her bitterness.

The country was as dizzy with joy over victory as it had been mournful, a few months before, over the threat of defeat. On March 13th Lord Roberts entered Bloemfontein. The welcome telegram travelled from the captured town to Windsor within a few hours. "By the help of God," wrote Lord Roberts, "and by the bravery of her Majesty's soldiers, the troops under my command have taken possession of Bloemfontein." The Queen's flag had been hoisted over the Presidency.

From Bloemfontein Lord Roberts advanced northwards, and after several combats he entered Kroonstad on May 12th. Five days afterwards, Colonel Baden-Powell and his troops in Mafeking were relieved by a mounted force under the command of Colonel Mahon. The advance of Lord Roberts's army now became a march of glory. On May 28th, he crossed the Vaal river. Three days afterwards he entered Johannesburg and, on June 5th, he rode into Pretoria. There were many minor battles to follow and many stubborn efforts at resistance on the part of the Boer leaders. But the war was won although it was not ended.

On the morning of March 8th, the Queen travelled from Windsor to London. Between Paddington Station and the Palace the streets were crowded with people who had waited for her since early morning. More than ever, she was the symbol of their courage and of the success which had come to the army in South Africa. The pavements were gay borders of smiling faces and thousands upon thousands of little flags. She drove into the Palace quadrangle, "through the principal gate, like for a triumphal entry." Again London acclaimed her, more loudly than for the Jubilees. Then she had been their revered Queen, mysterious because of the accumulation of her years and wisdom. Now she drove past them as the Sovereign of a victorious army.

At night, while the Queen was dining in the Palace, Londoners surged towards the railings and long after the last shafts of light

had withdrawn from the sky, they pressed against the gates. Constitution Hill was dense with people. They spread down the Mall and along every street that led to the Palace. They waited in silence at first, but suddenly, as if their pent-up emotions could be withheld no longer, they began to cheer. The Palace rang with the sound of a million voices. About half-past nine, the curtains of a window parted. The Queen appeared, no more than a shadowy form, looking down upon them. Then somebody carried a light across the room and held it behind her, so that the people could see her well. She stood perfectly still until she was so tired that she turned and went back to her chair.

## *Chapter Fifty*

1900

Almost forty years had passed since the Queen's last visit to Ireland. The Prince Consort had been alive then and they had been anxious as they drove through the streets of Dublin. There had been occasional hisses, mingled with the cheering, as the carriage rolled on towards Viceregal Lodge. Through all the forty years of her widowhood, until the time of the South African War, there had been no kindly word for Ireland in the Queen's letters or Journal. She had poured her indignation upon the country as zealously as she had given her heart to Scotland.

When it was almost too late, the courage of the Irish soldiers in South Africa and her own softened character allowed the Queen to make her first kindly gesture towards Ireland. Perhaps it was that the gentleness which came on the eve of death allowed her hands to unclench. The first signs of this change came when she read of the courage of her Irish troops in South Africa. The Queen telegraphed to Sir Redvers Buller in February: "I have heard with the deepest concern of the heavy losses sustained by my brave Irish soldiers." In March, the Queen swept her old resentment away and her gratitude was expressed in an Army Order which tells its own story:

"Her Majesty the Queen is pleased to order that in future, upon St. Patrick's Day, all ranks in her Majesty's Irish regiments shall wear, as a distinction, a sprig of shamrock in their head-dress, to commemorate the gallantry of her Irish soldiers during the recent battles in South Africa."

As Lord Wolseley prophesied, her appreciation of the gallant services of the Irish had "a magical effect upon that sentimental and imaginative race all over the world."

On the morning of March 3rd, the Queen had a long conversation with the Duke of Connaught. She had decided not to go to Cimiez this year. The animosity of the French and the impertinences they had written about her in the newspapers made her yearly visit quite impossible. There was, she told him: "a possible idea of mine to go to Ireland." A friend who talked to her about this

time wrote afterwards that she "desired almost passionately to be loved by the Irish."

Early in April Queen Victoria was wheeled on to her yacht, and on the morning of the 4th she accepted the salute of the Channel Fleet in Kingstown Harbour. At half-past eleven she went on shore. Her bonnet and parasol were embroidered with silver shamrocks and there was a bunch of real shamrocks pinned to her black dress. The procession of four carriages travelled from Kingstown to Dublin, and for two and a half hours the little figure bowed, backwards and forwards, acknowledging cheers such as Ireland had never given before. Some of the Irish women fell upon their knees in the roadway and cried as the Queen passed by. In their hours of allegiance the Irish were no less passionate than in their hours of indignation. They had swept in from the countryside to line the long road into Dublin. Bluejackets and soldiers and policemen guarded her way through the towns, but in many parts of the country "there was scarcely a policeman or soldier" to be seen. She noted this and was pleased. She drove under an arch upon which was inscribed:

*Blest for ever is she who relied  
On Erin's honour and Erin's pride.*

The Queen was very tired when she arrived at Viceregal Lodge. She was wheeled to the foot of the staircase in her chair and then carried up to her room, where she rested. But there was complete happiness as she wrote: "Even the Nationalists in front of the City Hall seemed to forget their politics and cheered and waved their hats."

The Queen stayed in Ireland for twenty-two days. On the first Saturday she drove slowly among fifty-five thousand schoolchildren in Phoenix Park. One mite called out: "Shure you're a nice old lady," as the carriage passed, and two little girls came forward with a nosegay. There was not one harsh intrusion; not one dissentient voice to mar the scene. The Queen wrote that the cheering "was quite overpowering."

The business of government was not allowed to relax. There were letters every day from Lord Salisbury and answers from the Queen. She protested because women were travelling out to South Africa

and occupying the rooms which belonged to wounded soldiers. There was a plea for Lord Roberts in the hope that he would not be hampered by political meddling, and a protest when dispatches were published describing the relief of Ladysmith to the detriment of some of the officers. "I must protest most strongly against any such important steps having been taken without my knowledge and approval," she wrote. Such "lamentable want of direction and judgment" was "cruel and ungenerous" to the officers on service. When she was not reading or writing, the Queen drove out from Viceregal Lodge upon some journey or other. One day she went to see the lions at the Zoo. Every day had its busy expedition. Convents were visited and the Mother Superior of the Sacred Heart kissed her hand. From the first day to the last, Ireland was courteous and charming to her. There was no hint of resentment over the forty years of neglect: no peevish wrangle over what was past. On April 26th the Queen returned to England. The Channel Fleet escorted the *Victoria and Albert* across the Channel, "but," wrote the Queen, "I unfortunately did not see much of it, as feeling very tired, I soon went below to rest. . . . I slept the greater part of the time."

The Prince of Wales had remained in London during his mother's holiday in Ireland. The letters of both mother and son show that they were subconsciously aware of the violent changes that waited for them in the coming year. The Queen pleaded with him not to go to Paris in May. "Dearest Bertie," she wrote, "I wish to express to you my earnest hope that you will not go to Paris. . . . We are all most anxious that your precious life should not be jeopardised."

When the Queen drove in London, crowds of people still waited for her and cheered. They formed the habit of lingering at the gates of Buckingham Palace, as if they sensed impending tragedy. She wrote again and again of her tiredness, but this did not prevent her busy journeys to and fro, to Wellington College, to hospitals and to exhibitions, and by railway between Windsor and London. In July she held her last garden party at Buckingham Palace. She drove among her guests in a low Victoria, "in the most broiling heat," and afterwards she took tea in the royal tent. Many old friends were brought up to her. For the first time the Queen

wore her spectacles on a public occasion. Her sight had become so dim that she could no longer recognise the faces of those with whom she spoke. The daily entries in her Journal became shorter and the paragraph describing the garden party ended, "I was dreadfully hot and rather tired. . . ."

In July the Queen's busy days were fraught with a new anxiety. There had been a hundred worries since her return from Ireland; the Boxer rising in Pekin and the outrages upon foreigners; the reports of mismanagement in the hospitals in South Africa, the continued guerilla warfare of which Lord Roberts sent her many harassing reports, and the news of Germany's growing naval ambitions. On July 31st the burden was increased through the death of the Queen's grandson, Prince Alfred, son of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg. The news reached Windsor early in the morning. "It is hard at eighty-one," was the Queen's courageous comment. "I was greatly upset, one sorrow, one trial, one anxiety following another. It is a horrible year, nothing but sadness and horrors of one kind and another. . . . Felt terribly shaken and broken. . . ."

#### 1900-1901

Through November and December of 1900 the Queen bewailed her failing health in her Journal. She felt "very poorly and wretched." "My appetite is completely gone, and I have great difficulty in eating anything." The disgust for food continued and most of her nights were sleepless and haunted by a mass of troubles. On November 11th she had "a shocking night." No draught could make her sleep and constant pain kept her awake. Yet she plodded through the wearisome papers each day and saw her Ministers, refusing to yield to the rheumatic pain and increasing blindness. When there were changes in Lord Salisbury's Cabinet, following the victorious election in October, she watched every move and anticipated every danger. Lord Salisbury was also approaching death and the depletion of his powers forced him to abandon the Foreign Office in favour of Lord Lansdowne. The Queen still commanded. She would accept Lord Lansdowne "on the strict understanding" that he should be under Lord Salisbury's "personal supervision." Remembering Lord Palmerston's pranks at the Foreign Office, she insisted that no telegram or dispatch

should be sent by the new Foreign Secretary without first being submitted to the Prime Minister. One reads the Queen's Journal for the last two months of her life in awe. She seemed to transcend human endurance. She would lie awake all night, torn by pain, and feel so tired next day that she could do nothing but rest upon a sofa. But, when duty made its demands, she would force her tired body to immediate effort. On the last day of November she drove into the Quadrangle at Windsor to inspect Canadian troops home from South Africa. The men were brought up to her carriage. The officers were presented, and the especially lame and mutilated were offered a word of sympathy. She asked some of the officers to dine and she entertained the men to dinner in the Riding School. The troops of every Dominion went to Windsor in this way. She even went down to the Riding School to speak with the soldiers, seeing them through a haze and listening to their applause. The Australians were especially jolly. When they had cheered, a sergeant called for "One more Colonial," which was, wrote the Queen, "apparently . . . . a particular way of cheering in Australia." She noted every passing event: the scandal over the housing of the poor in Windsor, the illness of Lord Roberts's daughter, and, at the end of December, the death of her beloved friend, Lady Churchill. All were dying: it seemed that with the end of the century the people who were identified with it were also to depart. On December 18th, the Queen travelled from Windsor to Osborne in great pain. Ten days after she dictated for the pages of her Journal:

"I had a bad night though I got a little sleep at the beginning. Besides, I don't think I could have slept, as there was such a fearful storm. Then I thought of what would be going on. . . . The weather was so tempestuous that I got quite alarmed about it. I went to sleep again, after I had wished to get up, which was very tiresome. It rained and blew so hard that it was impossible to think of going out, so I did some signing, though I could hardly see a word I wrote."

Early in the morning of January 2nd, Lord Roberts's ship steamed past the Queen's window and anchored in Southampton Water. Lord Roberts was to arrive at Osborne later in the day,

and the Queen "managed" to go out for half an hour to see the arch of welcome which had been built over the gates in his honour. In the afternoon her great soldier arrived at the house. His return from the war in South Africa was the last glorious episode in the Queen's life. She had always been thrilled by the return of her victorious soldiers and she rallied her strength to greet him and to talk to him. She received him "most warmly" and then, when her own greeting was over, he knelt gallantly and kissed her hand. When he went from the room, the Queen drooped under the effort she had made. She was wheeled away in her chair to rest. She saw Lord Roberts once more, on January 14th, and she talked with him for an hour. Mr. Chamberlain, the last of her Ministers to see her, came to talk about South Africa on the 11th. But her powers were fading quickly and on the evening of Tuesday, January 22nd, the Queen died. The last words she dictated for her Journal were of work. ". . . . Did some signing, and dictated to Lenchon." The last word she spoke coherently, on her death-bed, was "Bertie," her name for the new King, who was at her side.

There was not a breath of wind as the *Alberta* moved across from the Isle of Wight, past eleven miles of battleships and cruisers, to the mainland. The grey, sunless day deepened the majestic gloom of the funeral procession and the terrible reverberations of the cannon filled the Solent as the yacht moved on, through the rolling clouds of smoke. Emperors, Kings and Princes had hurried across Europe to pay their last homage to their venerable grandmother. German and French battleships hovered off the coast of Ryde as the *Alberta* moved forward, following an advance guard of black-hulled destroyers. An admiral stood at the prow of the funeral yacht and on the deck, at the corners of the white bier, four more admirals stood, stiff and still, guarding the coffin of the Queen of the Seas.

The hulls of the destroyers were painted black and the people of Portsmouth had pinned signs of mourning on their doors. But the coffin on the *Alberta* was covered with a fiery, crimson pall. The Queen's last wish had been that there should be no black trappings near her. She had asked instead that her wedding veil should be placed over her face. It was as a bride that she moved

slowly to the anchorage and then, in the morning, to London, where millions of people waited. They had emptied the shops of the metropolis of every inch of *crepe* and every black garment. An awful silence had settled on the streets of the city as the millions pressed in towards the route of the procession.

When the coffin was placed upon a gun-carriage at Windsor station, the horses became restive after their long wait in the cold. The guard of honour hurriedly helped to unharness the horses and took the shafts themselves. The communication cord (in those days slung from carriage to carriage, outside the train) was brought from the railway station so that the bluejackets could draw the gun-carriage up the steep hill. The white coffin was carried into the candle-light of St. George's Chapel for the funeral service and then into the Albert Memorial Chapel, where it rested all night. The smell of the thousands of wreaths was so heavy that one of the soldiers guarding the coffin fainted during his vigil.

Next day, none but the Royal family followed the coffin down to the Mausoleum at Frogmore. The last ceremony had no touch with the outer world. The Queen who had lived so long that France had passed through two dynasties and into a republic, so long that the Kingdom she inherited had become an Empire, left a void when she died; a void so frightening that, for a moment, life seemed to stand still. There were strange echoes of sorrow from strange places. In Dublin, a newspaper boy bought a bunch of violets and hung them upon the funeral poster he carried as he scampered through the streets. In Zululand, a chief said, when he heard of the death of the White Queen, "Then I shall see another star in the sky."

As the last procession moved towards the Mausoleum, light snow began to fall, as it had fallen two hundred and fifty years before, when the Cavaliers carried the coffin of Charles the First into the dark, silent Chapel at Windsor. The coffin was carried between an avenue of soldiers, past the pond upon which the Queen and the Prince had skated together, and into the Mausoleum. The sarcophagus was open and her husband's coffin lay there, and upon it, his sword.

A few weeks before he died, the Prince Consort had said to the Queen, "We don't know in what state we shall meet again; but

that we shall recognise each other and be together in eternity I am perfectly certain." In all the forty years of her widowhood, while the world about her moved restlessly towards doubt and cynicism, the Queen had believed what her husband told her, with all her heart.

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